

Chapter 1

The emergence of wilderness photography

In wildness is the preservation of the world.¹

Introduction

Before beginning a discussion of the Spurling legacy, it is necessary to explore the meaning of the term ‘wilderness photography’. While this term became popular in the late twentieth century, this chapter argues that the genre dates back to the earliest days of mechanical image making. In addition, this chapter traces the technological changes that occurred during the period of the Spurlings’ involvement with photography – from the early 1840s to 1941. However, ‘wilderness photography’ is not just about photography – it is also about wilderness. Since the meanings associated with this term have altered over time, the first section of this chapter traces the evolution of concepts of wilderness.

Wilderness photography is a branch of landscape photography, which in turn has its aesthetic roots in landscape painting. Therefore, the second section of this chapter examines different approaches to painting landscapes and the philosophical underpinnings to these representations. Although early photographers emulated painters, many painters were also interested in photography, and there was a transfer of ideas between the two.² As it gradually became apparent that photography and painting had different possibilities and could evolve independently, the next section of this chapter explores how photographers experimented with different ways of representing the landscape.

Images of wild places have had a profound impact on the way society views the environment, and in recent years wilderness photography has attained the status of a unique genre. It has established its own aesthetic code and has strong

¹ Henry David Thoreau, *Excursions* (New York, 1962) p. 185.

² Leigh Astbury, *City bushmen: the Heidelberg school and the rural mythology* (Melbourne, 1985) pp. 44; Andrew Sayers, *Australian art* (Oxford, 2001) p. 68; William Splatt and Dugald McLellan, *The Heidelberg School: the golden summer of Australian painting* (Victoria, 1986) p. 19.

associations with the conservation movement. Although the environmental historian Tim Bonyhady points out the term ‘conservationist’ is a construct of the twentieth century,³ the beginnings of the conservation movement in Australia date from the nineteenth century.⁴ The relationship between photographs of wild places and agitation for their protection also dates from this era. Therefore, this chapter explores how and when wilderness photography has played a part in campaigns for wilderness protection. The final section of this chapter identifies the properties of a successful wilderness photograph.

Concepts of wilderness

*Wilderness... is a historical term, and its meaning shifts with different times, different expectations and experience.*⁵

Today ‘wilderness’ is a word that evokes images of tranquility and rugged beauty unspoiled by human development. It is a sanctuary for contemplation, a place worth conserving when the march of progress threatens its existence. However, wilderness once meant something quite different. The history of how the meaning of wilderness has changed is complex. Therefore the following discussion provides only a brief outline of some of the more critical shifts in these beliefs. This discussion also traces how these various perceptions influenced the early settlers in Van Diemen’s Land and their attitudes towards land use. There was no single orthodoxy and different groups saw the land in different ways. Eventually this led to conflict, which galvanised into protests for environmental protection. This section examines the historical background as to how and why societies came to question accepted beliefs and recognise the importance of conserving wilderness areas. According to the American photo-historian Weston Naef, this ‘[a]wareness of nature’ coincided with the invention of photography.⁶

³ Tim Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth* (Carlton South, Victoria, 2000) p. 26.

⁴ Drew Hutton and Libby Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement* (Melbourne, 1999) pp. 15, 17.

⁵ Peter E Randall, *New Hampshire: A Living Landscape* (New Hampshire, 1996) p. 8.

⁶ Weston J Naef in collaboration with James N Wood, with an essay by Therese Thau Heyman, *Era of exploration: the rise of landscape photography in the American West, 1860-1885* (Buffalo, Boston, 1975) pp. 12, 17.

When humans lived as hunter-gatherers there was ‘no wilderness, only habitat’.⁷ As nomadic tribes settled down in one place and cultivated the land, they established defined boundaries. Inside the boundary was paradise, a word derived from the Persian meaning ‘a walled enclosure’.⁸ Beyond this sanctuary was the wilderness, frightening and unknown – a place of punishment and exile. These attitudes date back to biblical times, as exemplified by the story of Adam and Eve and their eviction from the Garden of Eden into the wilderness.⁹

For thousands of years religion played an important role in how humans perceived the environment. During the Middle Ages Europeans lived in settled communities and cultivated their land. They saw ‘nature as an earthly abode over which humankind had been given dominion by a beneficent God’.¹⁰ As their role on earth was to labour and produce sustenance, ‘wild nature had to be tamed, and thereby civilized or brought into harmony with the Divine Order’.¹¹ This philosophy sanctified and justified the clearance of vast tracts of forests for fuel and building materials. While heretics questioned the churches, for most of the population the *Bible* remained ‘the ultimate authority on all matters’.¹²

From the fourteenth to around the sixteenth centuries, the Renaissance brought ‘subtle but significant shifts in the conception of wild nature ... [and] political philosophy shattered the theological justification of feudal society in favour of secularized, democratic principles’.¹³ Although Europeans dreamt of a new order, democracy, as we know it today, was a concept not a reality. The Reformation brought more changes. As the merchant classes became increasingly powerful, ‘worldly success, rather than being prohibited by holy sanction, was now religiously enforced’.¹⁴ In this vision of the world, wilderness existed for

⁷ Roslynn Haynes, ‘From Habitat to Wilderness: Tasmania’s Role in the Politicising of Place’, *Papers and Proceedings* (Tasmanian Historical Research Association) v. 49, no. 4, December 2002, p. 269.

⁸ Robert Adams, *Beauty in Photography: Essays in Defense of Traditional Values* (New York, 1996) p. 16.

⁹ ‘Genesis’, *Bible*, ch. 2-4.

¹⁰ Max Oelschlaeger, *The idea of wilderness: from prehistory to the age of ecology* (New Haven, c. 1991) p. 70.

¹¹ Oelschlaeger, *The idea of wilderness*, p. 70.

¹² Oelschlaeger, *The idea of wilderness*, p. 71.

¹³ Oelschlaeger, *The idea of wilderness*, p. 74.

¹⁴ Oelschlaeger, *The idea of wilderness*, p. 75.

exploitation and economic gain. Taken to their logical conclusion, such opinions would have affected the very existence of wild areas. However, the scientific, industrial and economic revolutions, as well as the Reformation and the Enlightenment, brought new attitudes towards wild places. Nature now became the subject of scientific enquiry, something mechanistic that could be analysed and categorised.¹⁵ Finally, Modernism ‘transformed the idea of wilderness ... and complete[d] the intellectual divorce of humankind from nature’.¹⁶

These shifts in attitudes towards wilderness areas were more complex than the above discussion might indicate. Throughout these centuries no one philosophy held sway for all the population – there were always those who challenged the accepted orthodoxies. Others preferred earlier paradigms, or dreamt of a new order. Treatises, such as Thomas More’s *Utopia*, written in 1516, had explored the possibility of a perfect society.¹⁷ Hence, when settlers ventured into the new world part of their quest was to discover this elusive idyll. At the same time buried deep within their psyche was the age-old conception of wilderness as a place of banishment and testing – not just *terra incognita*, but ‘terror incognito’.¹⁸

The early settlers who came to Tasmania brought with them these complex and contradictory perceptions of the land. In 1642 the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman had named the island Van Diemen’s Land.¹⁹ In the early nineteenth century, the first colonisers, a band of convicts and their overseers, saw the place as a ‘demon land’ and considered it aptly named.²⁰ Some of the early explorers were equally unimpressed with the landscape. Even when they found regions they described as appealing, ‘always underpinning such praise was the notion that the area was a frightening waste land’.²¹ However, it soon became apparent if the colony were to

¹⁵ Oelschlaeger, *The idea of wilderness*, p. 77.

¹⁶ Oelschlaeger, *The idea of wilderness*, pp. 95–96.

¹⁷ Thomas More, *Utopia* (London, 2003).

¹⁸ In an undated, unpublished story entitled ‘Across the Plateau’, Stephen Spurling 3rd refers to Tasmania’s Central Plateau as being ‘a terror incognito’.

¹⁹ Roslynn D Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions: Landscapes in Writing, Art and Photography* (Sandy Bay, Tasmania, 2006) p. 8. Van Diemen’s Land was renamed Tasmania in November 1855 and Hobart Town was renamed Hobart on 1 January 1881.

²⁰ ‘Demon’, in Jonathon Green, *Cassell’s Dictionary of Slang* (London, 1998) p. 323; Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, pp. 167, 179.

²¹ Richard Flanagan, *A terrible beauty: history of the Gordon River country* (Victoria, 1985) p. 66.

prosper, free settlers had to be attracted to the island. In an attempt to encourage immigrants, in 1822 the surveyor, George William Evans described the climate as ‘the most salubrious of any on the globe for an European’²² and the scenery as ‘richly variegated and diversified by ranges of moderate hills and broad valleys, presenting the most agreeable scenes’.²³ Other writers endorsed his descriptions of a pastoral idyll and ‘painted a picture of an idealised Arcadian society, a rural Utopia, an Eden before the fall’.²⁴ Such glowing reports encouraged some free settlers but not enough. By the 1830s the island had more males than females and the London Emigration Committee embarked upon a campaign to attract able-bodied women to the colony. According to the editor in the *Hobart Town Courier*, the women arrived with the idea that the island was ‘a splendid little spot, filled with pretty white cottages each with single men of all ranks and callings waiting for wives’.²⁵ Amongst those who arrived expecting to find this Antipodean Utopia were Jessy Spurling and her young daughter Emma.²⁶

The island had a different appeal for the renowned Arctic explorer Sir John Franklin, who took up a posting as Lieutenant Governor in 1837.²⁷ Before leaving England, his wife, Lady Jane wrote in her diary, ‘I am ready to sigh for simplicity and peace and obscurity in some distant land, a land like Australia, where to breathe the very air is happiness’.²⁸ On arrival, the Franklins soon learnt that the reality was different from what they had imagined. Eventually, they had to concede that there were those in the colony who were determined to discredit them.²⁹ For the Franklins, their only respite from the political intrigues was to escape into the mountains and forests. Perhaps their most remarkable expedition was in March 1842, when they journeyed to the colony’s west coast, which at that time was marked on the maps as ‘Transylvania’.³⁰ According to Adrian Room’s

²² George William Evans, *Geographical, Historical and Topographical Description of Van Diemen’s Land* (Facsimile Reprint, Adelaide, 1967 – 1st published in 1822) p. 26.

²³ Evans, *A Geographical, Historical and Topographical Description of Van Diemen’s Land*, p. 27.

²⁴ Richard White, *Inventing Australia; Images and Identity 1688-1980* (Sydney, 1981) p. 33.

²⁵ *Hobart Town Courier*, 12 February 1836, p. 2 c. 3.

²⁶ See Chapter 2.

²⁷ Michael E Hoare, ‘“All Things are Queer and Opposite”: Scientific Societies in Tasmania in the 1840’s’, *Isis*, v. 60, no. 2, Summer, 1969, p. 199.

²⁸ Lady Jane Franklin letter to Mrs. Simpkinson, 8 December 1832 as quoted in Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Sir John Franklin in Tasmania, 1837-1843* (Melbourne, 1949) p. 116.

²⁹ Fitzpatrick, *Sir John Franklin in Tasmania*, p. 264.

³⁰ Hutton and Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, p. 62.

dictionary of place names, Transylvania means ‘land beyond the forest’, in other words, the wildest of wild places.³¹ As Stephen Spurling 3rd’s image (pictured below) reveals, over seventy years later much of Tasmania’s west coast was as wild and desolate as when the Franklin’s made their epic journey.



Collection of the National Library of Australia

Stephen Spurling 3rd, *The Frenchman's Cap from Mt Jukes*, c. 1916, gelatin silver photograph.

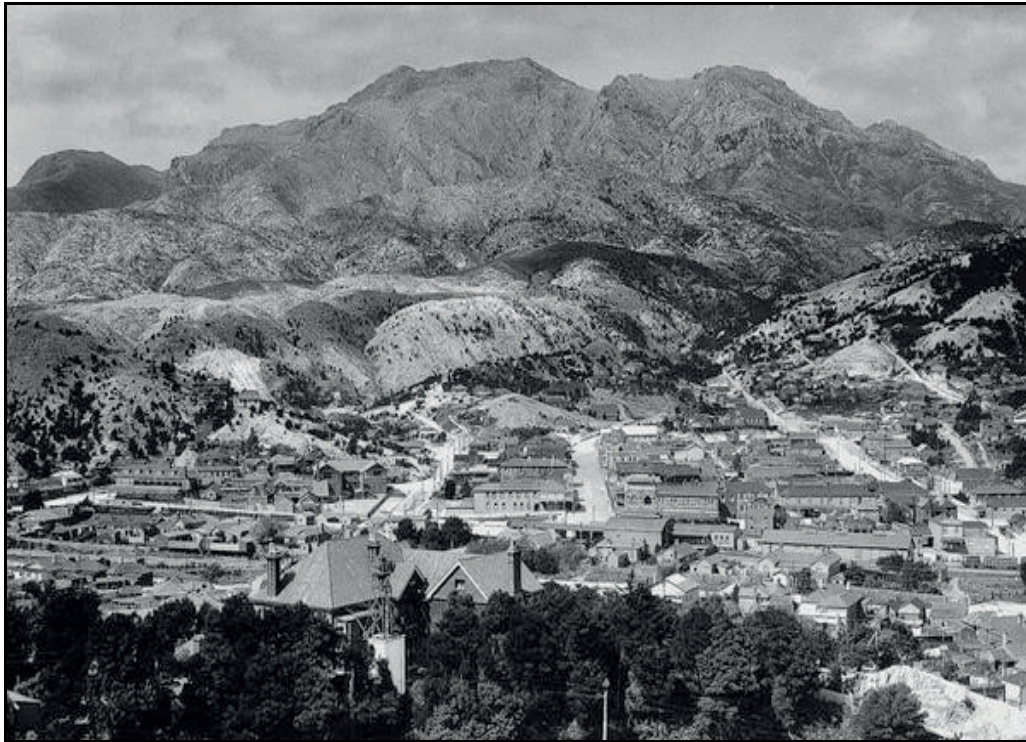
While the Franklins revelled in the island’s wilderness, the majority of the population regarded these areas as dark and terrible, and preferred the settled districts.³² They also believed the main asset of these regions was their economic value. According to the mores of the times, many early settlers maintained they had a God-given right to ‘do as they wished to “subdue” and “replenish” the earth’.³³ In addition they saw wild rivers, primeval forests and mineral deposits as either resources for plundering or impediments to advancement. Even ‘[t]oday, the west [coast of Tasmania] still bears the terrible wounds’ of these attitudes.³⁴ These environmental wounds are clearly visible in Stephen 3rd’s photograph of Queenstown in the 1930s. His image depicts the township nestling in a valley with a backdrop of the once heavily wooded peaks denuded of forest.

³¹ ‘Transylvania’ in Adrian Room, *Place-names of the world: a dictionary of their origins and backgrounds* (North Ryde, NSW, 1987) p. 232.

³² Fitzpatrick, *Sir John Franklin in Tasmania*, pp. 281, 287.

³³ Stefan Petrow, ‘Wilderness’, in Peter Beilharz and Trevor Hogan (eds), *Sociology: place, time and division* (South Melbourne, c. 2006) p. 32.

³⁴ C J Binks, *Pioneers of Tasmania's West Coast* (Hobart, 1988) p. 4.



Collection of the National Library of Australia

Stephen Spurling 3rd, *Queenstown, Mt Owen in rear*, c. 1930s, gelatin silver photograph.

Not everyone agreed with these opinions. Australian environmental authors Drew Hutton and Libby Connors have identified two waves or social movements that challenged the majority views regarding wild areas and the need for conservation. Hutton and Connors date the first wave from the 1860s.³⁵ Ecology experts Martin Mulligan and Stuart Hill agree with this claim, stating, ‘there was no serious *movement* for nature conservation until the 1860s and 1870s’.³⁶ However, Mulligan and Hill argue that this movement had its origins in the ‘Arcadian ecological tradition’ as exemplified by the early landscape painters and bush poets and also by the ‘imperial tradition’, instigated by the work of early scientists such as Joseph Banks.³⁷ Hutton and Connors also describe how the environmental movement in Australia had its beginnings in the early scientific societies, which promoted the study and recording of the unique flora and fauna.

³⁵ Hutton and Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, pp. 15, 17.

³⁶ Martin Mulligan and Stuart Hill, *Ecological Pioneers; A social history of Australian ecological thought and action* (England, 2001) pp. 33, 112.

³⁷ Mulligan and Stuart Hill, *Ecological Pioneers*, p. 7.

Such societies were active in Van Diemen's Land from the late 1820s.³⁸ Although these societies experienced varying degrees of influence and relevance, towards the end of the nineteenth century they played a role in campaigning for reserves and the regulation of 'resource exploitation'.³⁹

This impetus for change also came from economic considerations. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Tasmanian public had to be enticed to use the recently constructed railways and the best means of achieving this was to extol the delights of newly accessible places.⁴⁰ As well as exploiting wild regions for their assets, it also became important to conserve some areas for tourists. This concept of 'conservation' had a different meaning to modern understandings of the term. For Tasmanians in this era, the objectives of 'beautification, conservation and tourism were linked'.⁴¹ However, utilitarianism was still an overriding factor. From the late nineteenth century, if a lake or river needed damming or diverting to generate hydro-electricity, this had priority over other considerations.⁴²

The advent of the railways meant the public had access to wild regions. Consequently, by the early twentieth century bushwalking had become an increasingly popular recreational activity – both in Australia and overseas. The formation of bushwalking clubs helped to promote healthy, outdoor activity and encouraged a new appreciation of wild places. This in turn led to bushwalkers becoming concerned about the preservation of such areas for future generations.⁴³ They promoted the formation of national parks, and questioning the need for hydro-electric developments and industries based on the slaughter of wildlife.⁴⁴

³⁸ Hutton and Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, p. 27; Hoare, 'All Things are Queer and Opposite', p. 199.

³⁹ Hutton and Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, p. 23; Tim Bonyhady, 'The Artist as an Activist', in Pete Hay (ed.), *Imagine Nature* (Hobart, 1996) pp. 23-31.

⁴⁰ Petrow, 'Wilderness', p. 33; Hutton and Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, p. 75.

⁴¹ Lloyd Robson, *A History of Tasmania, Volume II, Colony and State from 1856 to the 1980s* (Melbourne, 1991) p. 284.

⁴² Robson, *A History of Tasmania, Volume II*, p. 294 cites the installation of a turbine at Distillery Creek to light the Waverley Woollen Mills, Launceston in 1888 and the commissioning of the Duck Reach power station (again near Launceston) in 1895.

⁴³ Melissa Harper, *The ways of the bushwalker: on foot in Australia* (Sydney, 2007) pp. 250-271.

⁴⁴ Petrow, 'Wilderness', pp. 34-35; Hutton and Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, pp. 74-75.

Hutton and Connors' second wave of environmental activism covers the period from Second World War up until the 1970s. Although a detailed analysis of this, and subsequent eras of environmental activism is outside the parameters of this thesis, during the 1970s and 1980s Tasmania experienced unprecedented environmental protests.⁴⁵ The issues were new, but the origins of these environmental concerns had their beginnings in the philosophies espoused during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the early scientific societies of the nineteenth century, and the bushwalking clubs of the early twentieth century.⁴⁶

The campaigns in the second part of the twentieth century changed the way people viewed the environment. Today the linking of beautification, conservation and tourism seems contradictory. To modern conservationists wilderness areas do not need beautification projects, and tourism requires careful monitoring to retain the integrity of the environment. However, humans can play a part in conserving natural environments. For many thousands of years indigenous Australians maintained the eco-diversity of wild areas through controlled burning. When European settlers disrupted this process by discouraging burn-offs, native species started to disappear due to changes in habitat, and large areas became vulnerable to bushfires. It has now become evident that to maintain the equilibrium in wild places, humans 'must become the partners not the conquerors of nature'.⁴⁷

Such ideas differ from concepts of wild places subscribed to by earlier generations, and challenge the philosophies of Modernism. However, during the Early Modern period people started to question the sanctity of urban environments, and 'the countryside was reconstructed as a virtuous, healthy and idyllic retreat'.⁴⁸ This view of nature was an extension of a philosophical movement that became popular towards the end of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries. Known as Romanticism, this philosophy affected a range of human endeavours.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Hutton and Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, pp. 89, 125-164.

⁴⁶ Harper, *The ways of the bushwalker*, pp. 265-271.

⁴⁷ Petrow, 'Wilderness', pp. 36-37; Nic Haygarth, *A View to Cradle: A History of Tasmania's Forth River High Country* (Canberra, ACT, 1998) p. 12.

⁴⁸ John Huckle, *Environments in a changing world* (New Jersey, 2001) p. 94.

⁴⁹ Hutton and Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, p. 26.

Artistic representations of landscape

Author Morse Peckham describes Romanticism as ‘a specific historical movement in art and ideas which occurred in Europe and America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries’.⁵⁰ Its influence pervaded many pursuits including art, literature, music, architecture and garden design.⁵¹ While there is debate as to the exact origins and nature of this movement, its roots can be traced, in part, to a reaction against the industrial revolution, scientific advancements and repressive political ideologies. It was ‘a conscious reaction to the extreme materialism engendered by the then new mechanistic outlook’.⁵² Romanticism was concerned with the nature of emotions. It was ‘a faith, or system of beliefs, expressible only through a symbolic and emotional art such as literature’.⁵³ Initially, philosophers identified two responses – the sublime and the beautiful.⁵⁴

In 1759 the philosopher Edmund Burke wrote, ‘for sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small ... one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure’.⁵⁵ Sublime landscapes were of immense proportions; they were wild and evoked a sense of wonder or even horror. They were dark, moody and contained an element of foreboding.⁵⁶ The genre was particularly popular among American painters who depicted the majestic and untamed aspects of their environment.⁵⁷ By contrast to the sublime, beautiful landscapes evoked

⁵⁰ Morse Peckham, ‘Towards a theory of Romanticism’, in Robert F Gleckner and Gerald E Enscoe (eds), *Romanticism: points of view* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1962) p. 212.

⁵¹ Nicola Trott, ‘The Picturesque, the Beautiful and the Sublime’, in Duncan Wu (ed.), *A Companion to Romanticism* (Oxford, UK, 1999) p. 74; William Muschenheim, *Elements of the Art of Architecture* (London, 1965) pp. 75, 184; Bernard Smith, *European vision and the South Pacific* (Sydney, 1985) p. 297.

⁵² Muschenheim, *Elements of the Art of Architecture*, p. 75.

⁵³ Ernest Bernbaum, ‘The Romantic Movement’, in Gleckner and Enscoe (eds), *Romanticism: points of view*, p. 95.

⁵⁴ Trott, ‘The Picturesque, the Beautiful and the Sublime’, p. 72.

⁵⁵ Edmund Burke, *A philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful*, 1759 (Facsimile reprint, England, 1970) pp. 237-238.

⁵⁶ Julia Horne, *The pursuit of wonder: how Australia's landscape was explored, nature discovered and tourism unleashed* (Carlton, Victoria, 2005) pp. 37-38; Tim Bonyhady, *Images in opposition: Australian landscape painting 1801-1890* (Melbourne, 1985) p. 64.

⁵⁷ David Stephenson, *Beautiful Lies: Photography and Wilderness*, at <http://www.utas.edu.au/arts/imaging/stephenson.pdf>, 16/08/2006, p. 2; David Stephenson, *New Landscapes: photographs from two continents* (Hobart, 1985) p. 4; Mary Street Alinder, *Ansel Adams: a biography* (New York, 1996) pp. 33-34.

pastoral scenes of contentment and serenity. They were idealised, delicate and on a diminutive scale.⁵⁸ Painters depicted scenes with muted skies and man in harmony with nature.⁵⁹ A beautiful scene might include streams wending through verdant pastures beyond which lay mountains or rolling hills.⁶⁰ Such images were usually associated with European or classical constructs of perfection.⁶¹

Later, clergyman, artist and author, William Gilpin and others devised a third category – the picturesque. According to Gilpin eight features could contribute towards a picturesque scene: ‘mountains, lakes, broken ground, woods, rocks, cascades, valleys and rivers’.⁶² Not only did Gilpin expound on the features of the picturesque, he also promoted the picturesque tour – sightseeing visits to areas of admirable scenery.⁶³ Picturesque landscapes were neither on the awe-inspiring scale of the sublime, or the perfection of the beautiful, but incorporated elements of both. When depicted in a painting, a typical picturesque scene included a border of dramatic, untamed wilderness, beyond which lay a scene of pastoral tranquility, bathed in sunlight.⁶⁴ While contrasts between light and shade, hill and vale, water and rocky outcrops created a sense of balance in picturesque images, the genre also depended on ‘rough textures, irregularity, partial concealment and the unexpected ... Grottos, ruins, rustic bridges, quaint cottages, and mills were amongst the objects that appealed to those with a taste for the picturesque’.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ Brian J Hudson, *Waterfalls of Jamaica: sublime and beautiful objects* (Kingston, Jamaica, 2001) p. 10.

⁵⁹ Susan Glickman, *The Picturesque and the Sublime: a poetics of the Canadian landscape* (Montreal, 1998) p. 10.

⁶⁰ Horne, *The pursuit of wonder*, p. 46.

⁶¹ Glickman, *The Picturesque and the Sublime*, p. 10; David Hansen, *John Glover and the Colonial picturesque* (Hobart, Tasmania, 2003) p. 26.

⁶² ‘Virtual Empire: The Cult of the Picturesque’, Macleay Museum, University of Sydney, at http://www.usyd.edu.au/museums/collections/macleay/hist_photos/virtual_empire/picturesque.shtml, 09/03/2008; Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, p. 63.

⁶³ Trott, ‘The Picturesque, the Beautiful and the Sublime’, p. 75; Horne, *The pursuit of wonder*, pp. 39-40; Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, p. 63.

⁶⁴ Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, p. 112; David Hansen, *Interview for Film Australia’s Wilderness*, at http://www.filmaustralia.com.au/wilderness/pdf/davidhansen_transcript.pdf, 29/08/2006, p. 1.

⁶⁵ Hudson, *Waterfalls of Jamaica*, p. 10.

Such picturesque imagery had a profound effect on European and early American landscape painters.⁶⁶ While European and American artists embodied romantic conceits in their works, early Australian landscape artists had other concerns. Firstly, the Australian landscape was very different from the ideals espoused by the Romantics.⁶⁷ Secondly, many of the early artists were either ignorant of the Romantic conventions, or had other motivations.

The first artists to depict Australian flora, fauna and landscapes were scientists travelling with expeditions.⁶⁸ These artists were more interested in scientific detail than creating aesthetically pleasing images. Following settlement, ex-forgers, who arrived in the colony as convicts, started to record the landscape. Their artistic attempts reflected a certain naivety. Some of these amateurs were unaware of the European artistic traditions and they struggled to depict the unfamiliar landscapes, the diffused colours and the intense sunlight of their adopted country.⁶⁹ There were exceptions. For example, the ex-forger, Joseph Lycett had some artistic training and his works featured aspects of the sublime and the picturesque. While historian Robert Hughes, describes his work as ‘conform[ing] to the tamest conventions of picturesque’, Tim Bonyhady, maintains his work depicts an ‘arcadia’ and ‘magnificent wilderness’.⁷⁰ Bonyhady also records that the ex-convict Thomas Watling produced the earliest oil paintings of ‘grand colonial landscapes’.⁷¹ Another ex-convict, Norwegian-born Knut Bull had also trained as an artist. According to the historian, Roslynn Haynes, when he gained a conditional pardon in 1853, he started producing paintings and lithographs that combined ‘an almost topographical attention to detail with the Sublime suggestions of German Romanticism’.⁷²

⁶⁶ Stephenson, *New Landscapes*, p. 3; Naef, *Era of exploration*, p. 15.

⁶⁷ Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, p. 242.

⁶⁸ Gay Sweely, *Depicting Early Australia: Visions of the NewSouth Lands*, at <http://uob-community.ballarat.edu.au/units/fs502/art.htm>, 10/08/2006, p. 2; Robert Hughes, *The art of Australia* (Harmondsworth, 1970) p. 28.

⁶⁹ Sweely, *Depicting Early Australia: Visions of the NewSouth Lands*, p. 2.

⁷⁰ Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, pp. xi-xii, 69-71; Hughes, *The art of Australia*, p. 38; Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, pp. 107-108.

⁷¹ Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, p. 82.

⁷² Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, p. 129; Ron Radford and Jane Hylton, *Australian Colonial Art 1800-1900* (Adelaide, 1995) p. 64.

The next artists to depict the Australian landscape were the surveyor/ artists. In 1808, George Harris executed some watercolours of the Tamar region in northern Tasmania. According to Roslynn Haynes, his pictures are the earliest known 'wilderness' images of Van Diemen's Land.⁷³ The art historian, Bernard Smith has described how the surveyor/ artists had a mission to produce a combination of 'topographical accuracy ... [and] picturesque beauty'. Some artists, such as William Westall, Ludwig Becker, J W Lewin and Thomas Baines did not venture into wild areas alone, but accompanied official exploration parties. Their works, and those of other surveyor/ artists, depicted the Australian 'local peculiarities of terrain, vegetation and atmosphere' and challenged traditional concepts of the picturesque.⁷⁴ Although Thomas Livingstone Mitchell, did produce works in the sublime and picturesque traditions, most surveyor/ artists found the landscape demanded a response that fitted uneasily with the conventions of the old world.⁷⁵

Professional artists experienced similar problems. When artist John Glover arrived in Van Diemen's Land in 1831, he brought with him the artistic conceits of his homeland. However, he soon realised that his new environment was different. Although he rarely worked outdoors, he experimented with ways of representing the stronger Antipodean sunshine and finding ways of recording the diverse landscape, flora and fauna more accurately.⁷⁶ Glover's paintings reflected his 'endeavour to accommodate the documentary prerequisites of exotic landscape to the vision of the masters'. According to Smith, his images included elements of pastoral idealism and realism as well as the picturesque.⁷⁷ In *A View of the Artist's House and Garden, in Mills Plains, Van Diemen's Land*, Glover depicted a scene of tranquility; his country home surrounded by ordered flowers and shrubs – in essence, an Arcadian paradise.⁷⁸ However, in the distance, looming over it all were darkly wooded hills, giving a sense of isolation and vulnerability.

⁷³ Haynes, 'From Habitat to Wilderness', p. 274.

⁷⁴ Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, pp. 60, 63, 67-68; Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, pp. 234, 281.

⁷⁵ Sayers, *Australian art*, p. 46.

⁷⁶ Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, pp. 72-74, 138-139; Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, p. 262.

⁷⁷ Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, p. 263.

⁷⁸ Radford and Hylton, *Australian Colonial Art*, pp. 71-73.



Collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia
Morgan Thomas Bequest Fund 1951.

John Glover (1767-1849), *A View of the Artist's House and Garden, in Mills Plains, Van Diemen's Land*, 1835, oil on canvas, 76.5 x 114.3 cm.

Within a decade of Glover's arrival many more artists, intent upon embarking on an Antipodean version of the picturesque tour, arrived in Australia. These artists included Conrad Martens, Louisa Anne Meredith and John Skinner Prout.⁷⁹ Martens arrived in New South Wales in 1835 and for forty years painted images of the colony in the picturesque tradition. According to Robert Hughes, his works featured 'a faint sense of the sublime'.⁸⁰ When Meredith arrived in 1839 she had already published books, which reflected, amongst other things, her fondness for picturesque travel. Her experiences in New South Wales and later Van Diemen's Land provided material for more publications. Although these books exhibited elements of the picturesque, she found the New South Wales landscapes lacking in some essential ingredients of the genre. While the scenery in and around Hobart Town was more to her liking, the illustrations and comments in her publication, *Our Island Home* reveal her continued reliance on European constructs of aesthetically pleasing vistas.⁸¹ Another picturesque traveller to visit the Antipodes around this time was the *plein air* artist Prout. Like Meredith, his travels took him to both New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land.⁸² Prout's dedication to the production of picturesque effects in his pictures was often at the expense of geographic authenticity. His journeys included a trip in 1845 to Lake St Clair,

⁷⁹ Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, p. 295.

⁸⁰ Hughes, *The art of Australia*, p. 44; Radford and Hylton, *Australian Colonial Art*, pp. 38-40; Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, pp. 65, 74-76, 81, 139.

⁸¹ Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, pp. 295-297; Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, pp. 26-27, 101-103; Sayers, *Australian art*, pp. 44-45.

⁸² Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, p. 298.

seeking the picturesque.⁸³ Another of his pictures, of Cataract Glen on Mount Wellington, depicted a waterfall tumbling through a rocky fissure. While Roslynn Haynes argues that this image invokes the sublime, author Brian Hudson points out that smaller cascades (such as Stephen Spurling 3rd's image of Alexandra Falls) also incorporate elements of the picturesque.⁸⁴



Collection of the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, State Library of Tasmania

John Skinner Prout (1805-1876), *Cataract Glen, Mount Wellington, Tasmania*, 1874-1876, steel engraving, 17.9 x 12 cm.



Collection of the National Library of Australia

Stephen Spurling 3rd, *Alexandra Falls – Liffey River*, c. 1923, gelatin silver photograph.

⁸³ Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, pp. 118, 151; Hughes, *The art of Australia*, p. 42; Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, pp. 298, 300; Horne, *The pursuit of wonder*, p. 43; Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, pp. 63-64, 79; Christopher Allen, *Art in Australia: from colonization to postmodernism* (London, c. 1997) p. 51.

⁸⁴ Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, pp. 119, 122; Hudson, *Waterfalls of Jamaica*, p. 10.

The gold rush heralded a period of substantial population growth and society changed from being mainly composed of convicts and their overseers. A diverse cross-section of society made their way to the Antipodes, bringing with them many and varied skills. Amongst this new breed of immigrants were artists such as Eugene von Guérard who came to Australia in 1852 seeking gold. Instead he discovered he was better suited to recording the scenery.⁸⁵ His paintings reflect fine attention to detail in the traditions of German Romanticism and depict the landscape as 'both as a sublime untamed wilderness and a rural idyll'.⁸⁶ According to Tim Bonyhady, Guérard would have also been aware of the writings of the German scientist Alexander von Humboldt, who espoused the aesthetic potential, as well as the scientific significance of tropical scenery.⁸⁷

For many colonial artists, much of the Australian landscape with its large tracts of desert and harsh light proved unsuited to the classic depiction of the sublime.⁸⁸ Although such landscapes would later prove a magnet for aspiring artists, in the early years of settlement, and with the exception of S T Gill, and some official expeditions into arid areas, artists tended to ignore these regions.⁸⁹ Instead, they sought mountainous areas where they found subjects for their paintings. William Charles Piguenit was one such artist. He travelled around his home state of Tasmania as well as interstate seeking sublime scenery.⁹⁰ Piguenit was both an artist and a photographer and he sometimes employed both mediums during his expeditions.⁹¹ His paintings such as *Butts of Ben Lomond* (1878), *Mount King*

⁸⁵ Candice Bruce and Edward Comstock, 'Guérard, Johann Joseph Eugen (Eugene) von (1811-1901)', in Joan Kerr (ed.), *The Dictionary of Australian Artists: Painters, Sketchers, Photographers and Engravers to 1870* (Melbourne, 1992) p. 331; Hughes, *The art of Australia*, pp. 46, 50; Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, pp. 61, 64-65; Sayers, *Australian art*, pp. 51-52; Allen, *Art in Australia*, p. 30.

⁸⁶ Isobel Crombie (ed.), *Flagship: Australian Art in the National Gallery of Victoria, 1790-2000* (Melbourne, 2002) p. 15; Horne, *The pursuit of wonder*, p. 72.

⁸⁷ Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, pp. 64-67, 76-79, 81.

⁸⁸ Stephenson, *New Landscapes*, p. 5.

⁸⁹ Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, pp. 61-62. Today, Broken Hill in the far west of New South Wales, is something of a mecca for artists, who are attracted by the clarity of the light.

⁹⁰ Stephenson, *New Landscapes*, p. 5; Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, p. 281; Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, pp. 154-164; Richard Flanagan and Cassandra Pybus, 'Green Images', in Richard Flanagan and Cassandra Pybus (eds), *The Rest of the World is Watching* (Sydney, 1990) p. 157; Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, p. 83.

⁹¹ 'Piguenit, William Charles (1836-1914)' in Kerr (ed.), *The Dictionary of Australian Artists*, pp. 628-630; Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, p. 158.

William from Lake George (1886) and *Mt Olympus, Lake St Clair* (1888)⁹² include wild, untamed areas, lakes and towering mountains.⁹³ At times, Piguénit deliberately distorted the height of mountains and used devices such as moody cloud formations for increased dramatic effect.⁹⁴ On other occasions he included ‘tiny figures whose role [it was] to indicate the immense scale of the natural features’.⁹⁵ Examples include his painting of *The Arthur Range*, which depicts two walkers in the foreground. While such works have much in common with the traditions of the sublime, Piguénit also incorporated some elements of the picturesque in his paintings.⁹⁶ Although he often chose to ignore the picturesque convention of a darker foreground to frame his pictures,⁹⁷ he made interesting use of reflections. Sometimes, when the reflections mirrored the swirling clouds, they served to heighten the dramatic effect, but on other occasions, when the view was more tranquil, they emphasised the picturesque aspects of the scene.⁹⁸



Collection of the National Library of Australia

William Charles Piguénit (1836-1914), *On the Craycroft [i.e. Cracroft], Tasmania*, 1878, oil on academy board, 31 x 45.3 cm.

⁹² Radford and Hylton, *Australian Colonial Art*, pp. 66-67; Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, pp. 160-161.

⁹³ Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, pp. 161, 294; Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, p. 67.

⁹⁴ Nic Haygarth, *Booming Tasmania, how the Anson/ Beattie photographic studio sold the island and itself 1880-1901* (Perth, Tasmania, 2008) p. 15; Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, p. 163.

⁹⁵ Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, p. 163.

⁹⁶ Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, pp. 81-85; Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, pp. 155-157, 163; Hansen, *Interview for Film Australia's Wilderness*, p. 1; Allen, *Art in Australia*, p. 46.

⁹⁷ Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, pp. 155, 163; Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, p. 85.

⁹⁸ John Conron, *American picturesque* (University Park, PA, c. 2000) pp. 2, 11.

While many artists were intent on producing detailed, accurate images of nature, in accordance with the rules of traditional art, others experimented with different approaches. Some artists were more concerned with conveying sensations, than with providing intricate detail.⁹⁹ Known as impressionists, these artists used thick brush strokes or even dabs, combined with new approaches to colour mixing to accentuate the interplay of light between objects.¹⁰⁰ To ensure their works were a true reflection of their subjects, impressionists often painted their landscapes out of doors (*en plein air*).¹⁰¹ Over the years, many Australian artists have embraced impressionism. Some of the earliest, such as Tom Roberts, Charles Condor, Frederick McCubbin, Arthur Streeton and others, responded with their own interpretations. However, Robert Hughes argues that these painters, known collectively as the Heidelberg artists, did not fully embrace the movement, and their ‘only real point of contact with true impressionism was painting in the open air, straight from the motif’.¹⁰² Some Heidelberg artists also started to depict the landscape as a friendlier environment. From the earliest years of European settlement, artists had viewed the unfamiliar scenery, screeching birds, bizarre animals and strange plant species as manifestations of a ‘weird melancholy’ that pervaded the Australian bush. This term, popularised by the author Marcus Clarke, had become an important theme in colonial art and literature. According to Tim Bonyhady, ‘[w]hile the expression of melancholy was a key element in Frederick McCubbin’s outdoor narrative paintings’, other artists, such as Tom Roberts, started to produce works that ‘reflect[ed] the decline of melancholy in Australian landscape painting’, and painted less foreboding scenes.¹⁰³ Concurrent with these changes, the growing popularity of photography meant that artists, both in Australia and overseas, started to question the need for painters to represent landscapes realistically, as the camera was now able to perform this function.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ James H Rubin, *Impressionism* (London, 1999), p. 23.

¹⁰⁰ Rubin, *Impressionism*, pp. 31-34, 128-9; David Bomford, *Impressionism* (London, 1990) p. 92.

¹⁰¹ Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, pp. 143-144; Rubin, *Impressionism*, pp. 93-132.

¹⁰² Splatt and McLellan, *The Heidelberg School*, p. 1; Hughes, *The art of Australia*, pp. 51-70; Anne Gray (ed.), *Australian art in the National Gallery of Australia* (Canberra, ACT, 2002) pp. 11-12.

¹⁰³ Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, pp. 122-144; Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, pp. 64-65, 130; Allen, *Art in Australia*, pp. 30-31, 45-46, 59.

¹⁰⁴ Hilary Spurling, *Matisse the Master; A Life of Henri Matisse: The Conquest of Colour, 1909-1954* (New York, 2005) p. 26; Rubin, *Impressionism*, pp. 34, 189, 413-416.

Photography: discovery and technological advances

Painters had defined ways and means of representing landscapes, but the invention of photography created a new medium for depicting the outdoors. While the optical principles used in photography date back to China in the fifth century, it took another thousand years before experimenters in Europe applied these principles to invent the camera obscura. This early form of camera was simply a mechanism for projecting an image. The modern camera, which is capable of reproducing an image, dates from the early nineteenth century.¹⁰⁵

The most successful early photographic process was the daguerreotype, invented in 1837 by Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre in France. Two years later the French government released descriptions of this photographic process to the public.¹⁰⁶ Daguerre's process evolved from his experiments with fellow researcher Joseph Niépce and involved sensitising silver-plated copper sheets with iodine and then exposing them to mercury fumes.¹⁰⁷ Since the process demanded long exposure times, the earliest daguerreotypes were of scenery and buildings rather than people.¹⁰⁸ After some modifications to the original prototype, daguerreotypes also proved suitable for portraits.¹⁰⁹ Shortly after Daguerre's announcement, an English scholar, William Henry Fox Talbot released details of his process, which he called 'photogenic drawing'.¹¹⁰ News of these discoveries spread quickly. By the autumn of 1839, there were displays and demonstrations of Daguerre's process in America and in the 1850s there were daguerreotype portrait studios in major American cities.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ Mark Osterman, 'Camera', in Michael R Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, 4th edition (Boston, 2007) p. 51; A D Morrison-Low, 'pre-photographic imaging devices' in Robin Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph* (Oxford, 2005) pp. 521-523; Helmut Gernsheim, *A Concise History of Photography*, 3rd edition (New York, 1986) pp. 10-11.

¹⁰⁶ Grant B Romer, 'Daguerre, Louis-Jacques-Mandé (1787-1851)' in Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, pp. 125-126; Roger Watson, 'Daguerre, Louis Jacques Mandé (1787-1851)' in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, pp. 151-152.

¹⁰⁷ Romer, 'Daguerre, Louis-Jacques-Mandé (1787-1851)' in Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, p. 125; Hope Kingsley, 'Daguerreotype', in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, pp. 152-153.

¹⁰⁸ Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography* (New York, 1982) pp. 27-28.

¹⁰⁹ Newhall, *The History of Photography*, pp. 28-30.

¹¹⁰ Osterman, 'Photography on Paper', in Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, pp. 28-29.

¹¹¹ Newhall, *The History of Photography*, pp. 33-39.

Meanwhile, news of Talbot's discovery reached the Antipodes in late 1839. On 19 October of that year, the *Cornwall Chronicle* in Launceston published details of a talk given by a Dr Fyfe on Talbot's photogenic drawing experiments.¹¹² According to photo-historian Gael Newton, this is the first known mention of photography in Australia.¹¹³ Before long more information about these discoveries reached the colony in other newspapers and journals.¹¹⁴ In addition, travellers such as the Polish geologist and explorer, Paul Strzelecki, who arrived in Launceston in July 1840, brought information on the daguerreotype.¹¹⁵ New settlers, such as Louisa Anne Meredith and her husband Charles, who arrived in Van Diemen's Land in October 1840, also brought news of these innovations.¹¹⁶

These discoveries were of particular interest to the incumbent Lieutenant Governor, Sir John Franklin. He and his wife were keen proponents of all branches of science and together they did much to stimulate interest in scientific matters. Amongst other things, they helped establish societies to promote scientific awareness among the local population.¹¹⁷ Franklin was a leading figure in the Royal Society in London and corresponded with society members regarding the new photographic processes.¹¹⁸ A letter, dated 5 February 1840, from member Dr John Richardson to Franklin describes '[o]ne of the most remarkable discoveries of modern times ... The Daguerreotype'.¹¹⁹ Franklin probably received this letter around the same time as Stephen 1st presented a letter from his mother to the Lieutenant Governor.¹²⁰ Extracts from Richardson's letter, along with extracts from a letter from Dr Buckland, which also described daguerreotype

¹¹² *Cornwall Chronicle*, 19 October 1839, p. 4 c. 2-3.

¹¹³ Gael Newton, *Shades of Light, Photography and Australia 1839-1988* (Canberra, 1988) p. 1.

¹¹⁴ For example, the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, Hobart has in its collection a copy of the *Athenaeum*, dated 17 July 1841, which contains an article about Talbot's calotype process.

¹¹⁵ Newton, *Shades of Light*, p. 4.

¹¹⁶ Newton, *Shades of Light*, p. 1.

¹¹⁷ Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, p. 104; Fitzpatrick, *Sir John Franklin in Tasmania*, p. 194; Hoare, 'All Things are Queer and Opposite', pp. 200-206.

¹¹⁸ Jack Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, 2nd edition (Melbourne, 1977) p. 126.

¹¹⁹ *Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science, Agriculture, Statistics & c.*, v. 1 (Hobart, 1842) p. 71.

¹²⁰ Jessy Spurling wrote her letter on 18 July 1840 (CSO 5/1/226/5756 p. 445, Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office). Since, according to Gael Newton (Newton, *Shades of Light, Photography and Australia*, p. 1) in this era shipping averaged 134 days to reach Australia, Richardson's letter probably arrived in Van Diemen's Land in late June or early July 1840.

experiments, were read at the first meeting of 'The Society', on 3 March 1841.¹²¹

These extracts later appeared in the *Tasmanian Journal*.¹²²



Collection of the National Library of Australia

Louis Haghe (1806-1885), *Sir John Franklin*, c 1840s, lithograph, 34.6 x 25.4 cm.

Around this time, photographers started arriving Australia. According to photo-historian, Jack Cato, a visiting Frenchman took the first Australian photograph in Sydney in May 1841.¹²³ Less than two years later, Australia's earliest professional photographer, George Barron Goodman opened a studio in Sydney.¹²⁴ In August 1843, Goodman travelled to Van Diemen's Land and set up a business in Hobart Town.¹²⁵ Goodman held the Australian licence for the daguerreotype process and for a time, his threats of legal action proved a disincentive to local amateurs

¹²¹ *Minutes of 'The Society' V D Land*, 3 March 1841 (Royal Society Collection RS 147, March 1841-March 1842) p. 7. Sir John Franklin's fascination with early photography continued; he took a daguerreotype camera on his ill-fated expedition to the Northwest Passage in 1845.

¹²² *Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science, Agriculture, Statistics*, pp. 71-72.

¹²³ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, p. 1.

¹²⁴ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, pp. 2-3.

¹²⁵ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, p. 3.

wanting to turn professional. By the early 1850s, these problems had been resolved and a number of photographers established portraiture businesses in Hobart Town and Launceston.¹²⁶ One such daguerreotypist was J W Newland, who arrived from England in 1848, and set up a temporary gallery in Hobart Town. During his stay he took a streetscape of Murray Street, Hobart Town. This image is the earliest known Australian outdoor daguerreotype still in existence.¹²⁷



Collection: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

J W Newland (1810-1857), *Murray Street*, 1848, daguerreotype full plate, 20 x 15.6 cm.

Around this time, Stephen Spurling 1st started his amateur experiments with photography. By the mid-1850s he had left his government employment and had set up in business, selling, amongst other items, photographic materials.¹²⁸

The daguerreotype process was less successful in England where there were problems with the patent. However, in 1841 Talbot took out a patent on his invention, which by now he called the talbotype. His process evolved over time, and the refined version became known as the calotype. This was the first

¹²⁶ Chris Long, 'Thomas Bock as a Photographer', in Dianne Dunbar (coordinator), *Thomas Bock: Convict Engraver, Society Portraitist* (Launceston and Canberra, 1991) pp. 64-68.

¹²⁷ Chris Long, *Tasmanian Photographers 1840-1940: A Directory* (Hobart, 1995) pp. 82-83; *Courier*, 9 December 1848 p. 1 c. 4, p. 2 c. 5.

¹²⁸ See discussion in Chapter 2.

negative-positive system and it had several advantages over the daguerreotype. Not only it was possible to print multiple copies from a single negative, but it was also easier and cheaper. Printed on salted paper, the calotype had the texture of quality writing paper, but the image was not as sharp as the daguerreotype.¹²⁹ Due to licence restrictions, the calotype had limited popularity outside England. Nevertheless, some calotype photographers did take their cameras to other lands. For example, the Frenchman Maxime Du Camp took some remarkable images of temples and pyramids in Egypt during his trip from 1849 to 1852.¹³⁰

Other calotype photographers ventured to the Antipodes. The Scotsman Robert Tennant took a series of calotype images, believed to be the earliest known photographs of South Australia, during his visit to the colony in 1850. Tennant was a member of the Edinburgh Calotype Club and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery currently holds twenty-six of his images.¹³¹ The Englishman Douglas Kilburn was another visiting calotype enthusiast. In 1854 he presented a paper describing his calotype experiments to a meeting of Royal Society in Tasmania. According to Kilburn, the atmospheric conditions in London were more conducive to the process than conditions in the colony. However, he had to admit his comments did not include central London, especially in foggy conditions. He also stated that due to the long exposure times, the process was better suited to landscapes than portraits.¹³²

¹²⁹ Osterman, 'The Technical Evolution of Photography in the 19th Century', in Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, pp. 28-30; Lenman, 'Calotype' and Larry J Schaaf, 'Talbot, William Henry Fox (1800-77)' in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, pp. 94-95, 616; Newton, *Shades of Light*, p. 206; Gernsheim, *A Concise History of Photography*, p. 15.

¹³⁰ Newhall, *The History of Photography*, pp. 48-51.

¹³¹ Email from Sara Stevenson, Chief Curator, Scottish National Photography Collection to Christine Burgess, 7 March 2008; Julie Robinson and Maria Zagala, *A Century in Focus, South Australian Photography, 1840s-1940s* (Adelaide, 2007) p. 66; Newton, *Shades of Light*, p. 14; National Library of Scotland, *Pencils of Light, The Albums of the Edinburgh Calotype Club*, at <http://www.nls.uk/pencilsoflight/>, 07/03/2008; Art Gallery of South Australia, *The Calotype*, at <http://www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/noye/Misc/Calotype.htm>, 19/02/2008.

¹³² Douglas T Kilburn, 'On Sun Pictures, by the Calotype Process', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Van Diemen's Land*, v. II, 1852-54, pp. 449, 457; Royal Society of Tasmania, *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Van Diemen's Land*, v. II, part III, January 1854, p. 523; 'Kilburn, Douglas Thomas (c. 1813-1871)' in Kerr (ed.), *The Dictionary of Australian Artists*, p. 425.

That same year, various Australian studios announced their introduction of the newly discovered wet plate process. This invention, pioneered by Englishman Frederick Scott Archer in 1851, was an extension of the calotype and was free of patents. The wet plate process was ideal for portraiture, but less suitable for outdoor work as each plate had to be prepared individually, then immediately exposed and developed. Further, the process involved the use of highly flammable collodion and other hazardous chemicals including cyanide. This meant that for fieldwork photographers had to carry their glass plates and other fragile equipment, as well as their chemicals and a portable darkroom.¹³³ Outdoor, wet plate photography was difficult and dangerous, but many enthusiasts were prepared to meet the challenge. In Europe, some wet plate photographers depicted rural scenes, while others embarked on a grand tour, carting their cumbersome equipment as far afield as the Middle East and Asia. For example, the Englishman Samuel Bourne traversed India and fellow compatriot Francis Frith undertook a series of expeditions to Egypt and Palestine. Frith endured appalling conditions to produce his images. It was worth the effort. His photographs proved enormously popular and he was able to set up a business reproducing his photographs. For some time his company was the largest of its type in Europe.¹³⁴ According to Weston Naef, this ‘first sustained body of outdoor work’ produced by these photographers and their contemporaries, ‘gave rise to the genus of landscape photography’.¹³⁵

Up until this stage American wet plate photographers had been mainly concerned with recording the grandeur of the outdoors. However, it soon became apparent that photography had other possibilities. For example, between 1860 and 1885 the American government sent expeditions to explore and photograph the west

¹³³ Osterman, ‘Collodion process’, in Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, pp. 61-62; Kingsley, ‘collodion’ and Kingsley, ‘wet-plate process’ in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, pp. 130, 680; Newton, *Shades of Light*, p. 207; Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, pp. 13, 30-31; Gernsheim, *A Concise History of Photography*, p. 16.

¹³⁴ Sophie C Gordon, ‘Bourne, Samuel (1834-1912)’ and Kelley E Wilder, ‘Frith, Francis (1822-98)’ in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, pp. 80-81, 239; Stephenson, *Beautiful Lies*, p. 2; Newhall, *The History of Photography*, pp. 103, 105, 110; Naef, *Era of exploration*, pp. 25, 67.

¹³⁵ Naef, *Era of exploration*, pp. 25-26.

coast and the construction of the railroad. These images, they hoped, would encourage settlement and an appreciation of the vastness of the continent.¹³⁶ Photographs also provided a valuable record of the Civil War. Photographers such as Alexander Gardner and George Barnard endured incredible hardships to obtain images that reflected all aspects of the hostilities.¹³⁷

Despite its limitations, the wet plate heralded a new era in American scenic photography. Weston Naef refers to it as ‘the golden age of landscape photography’. Defining ‘*pure landscape*’ as ‘pictures that depict nature for its own sake’, he devotes his book to the photographers of America’s west who focussed their ‘attention on nature itself as the primary subject’.¹³⁸

There were many Australian exponents of the wet plate process. In Melbourne, Charles Nettleton used wet plates to record every aspect of the city’s development and he produced the first commercial pictorial album in Australia.¹³⁹ Likewise, Richard Daintree accumulated a large body of work during his travels in northern Queensland.¹⁴⁰ However, Charles Bayliss was perhaps Australia’s most remarkable wet plate operator. The quality of his images prompted photography curator and writer Helen Ennis to describe him as ‘the most outstanding landscape photographer of the nineteenth century’.¹⁴¹ In Tasmania, the artist/ photographer William Charles Piguenit found the wet plate brought new possibilities. He used his camera to take photographs of his completed paintings for record keeping purposes, and to take images on trips to wilderness areas.¹⁴² In 1870 he exhibited some of his prints at the Sydney Intercolonial Exhibition and received ‘the highest

¹³⁶ Newhall, *The History of Photography*, pp. 94-103; Stephenson, *Beautiful Lies*, p. 3; Naef, *Era of exploration*, pp. 12-13, 42-56.

¹³⁷ Newhall, *The History of Photography*, pp. 88-94; Robert Pols, ‘Barnard, George (1819-1902)’, Constance B Schulz, ‘Brady, Mathew (c. 1823-1896)’, Schulz, ‘Gardner, Alexander (1821-82)’ in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, pp. 65, 83, 244; Gernsheim, *A Concise History of Photography*, p. 65. According to Mary Street Alinder, Mathew Brady, who is often cited as taking many of the Civil War photographs, actually copyrighted other photographers’ works as his own. Alinder, *Ansel Adams*, p. 173.

¹³⁸ Naef, *Era of exploration*, p. 16.

¹³⁹ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, pp. 31-33; Helen Ennis, *Intersections: Photography, History and the National Library of Australia* (Canberra, 2004) p. 42.

¹⁴⁰ Newton, *Shades of Light*, p. 48; Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, p. 179.

¹⁴¹ Ennis, *Intersections*, p. 93.

¹⁴² Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, pp. 158-159; Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, p. 91.

award, a bronze medal' for his work.¹⁴³ Other Tasmanian wet plate photographers at this time include the Spurling family. In the early 1870s Stephen Spurling 1st and his youngest son Frederick were operating a photographic studio in Hobart, while his second-born son, Stephen 2nd had opened a studio in Launceston.¹⁴⁴

From the daguerreotype era onwards, the stereo photograph or stereograph proved a popular way to view landscape photography. In the days of the daguerreotype, photographers created stereo images by taking two almost identical photographs of the same scene. Later, photographers used a camera with twin lenses. The two resultant photographs, when placed side-by-side and viewed through a stereoscope, produced a three-dimensional effect. Apart from landscapes, subjects could include everything from portraits to pictorial comics. Stereographs remained popular until the early twentieth century and there are numerous examples of these pictures held in museums and art galleries.¹⁴⁵ For example, the National Gallery of Australia holds thirteen Stephen Spurling 2nd stereographs featuring views in and around Launceston.¹⁴⁶ The popularity of the stereograph, and the improved technology that made the process possible, may have had a long-term influence. Weston Naef suggests that the 'portability of the stereo camera perhaps contributed to the rise of wilderness photography'.¹⁴⁷ The first known Australian stereographic presentation occurred in 1853 when Douglas Kilburn demonstrated the process in Hobart Town.¹⁴⁸ Before long, Hobart Town photographer, Samuel Clifford had a large stock of these images at his store in Liverpool Street.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴³ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, p. 107.

¹⁴⁴ See discussions in Chapters 2, 3.

¹⁴⁵ Osterman, 'Stereo photography' and Leslie Stroebe, 'Stereophotography' in Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, pp. 116, 729; British and Australian Stereo Photographers and Publishers', Macleay Museum, University of Sydney, at http://www.usyd.edu.au/museums/collections/macleay/hist_photos/virtual_empire/a_z_list.shtml, 09/03/2008.

¹⁴⁶ National Gallery of Australia, Spurling images, at <http://cs.nga.gov.au/SEARCH.cfm>, 29/05/2008. For an example of a Stephen Spurling 2nd stereograph, see Chapter 3.

¹⁴⁷ Naef, *Era of exploration*, p. 23.

¹⁴⁸ Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, p. 68.

¹⁴⁹ 'Kilburn, Douglas Thomas (c. 1813-1871)' in Kerr (ed.), *The Dictionary of Australian Artists*, p. 425; Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, pp. 34-35; British and Australian Stereo Photographers and Publishers', Macleay Museum, University of Sydney.

The demand for stereoscope photographs encouraged photographers to journey further afield in search of subjects for their images. For example, in early 1862 a travelling photographer, ostensibly known as Paul Ricochet, visited central Tasmania.¹⁵⁰ According to his account, Ricochet used a binocular stereoscopic camera and collodio-albumen plates, to take the earliest known photographs of Lake St Clair.¹⁵¹ Although Ricochet's images appear to have vanished, around twelve months later, Hobart solicitor and amateur photographer Morton Allport made a similar excursion into the same area and took a series of twenty-four stereograph photographs.¹⁵² Unlike Ricochet's images, Allport's images have survived. Roslynn Haynes describes them as 'probably the earliest examples of Australian wilderness photography'.¹⁵³ Excursions, such as Ricochet and Allport's were the photographic equivalent of the picturesque tour.



Collection of the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, State Library of Tasmania

Morton Allport (1830-1878), *Mount Ida (Lake St Clair)*, 1863, b&w stereograph, each print 7.3 x 7.3 cm.

¹⁵⁰ The name Paul Ricochet is something of an enigma and is probably a pseudonym. Newton, *Shades of Light*, p. 48; Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, p. 95.

¹⁵¹ Newton, *Shades of Light*, p. 48; Paul Ricochet, 'Photography in Australia', *Photographic News*, no. 261, 4 September 1863, p. 426. Ricochet's plates were an adaption of the wet plate process. By coating his plates with albumen, they could be 'preserved' for the duration of his trip.

¹⁵² Christine Burgess, *The Paul Ricochet Mystery* (Unpublished, 2007).

¹⁵³ Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, p. 154; Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, pp. 3-4, 95.

Another way of displaying landscape images was a magic lantern slide show. These shows became popular in the 1870s, and remained in vogue until the early twentieth century. Magic lantern shows were the precursor to projector slide shows, and were in use until the 1970s.¹⁵⁴ Today, PowerPoint presentations create a similar, but more sophisticated effect. To create a magic lantern slide show a projectionist placed a series of small, illustrated glass plates into a lantern box, which projected the image on to a screen. Images could be sketches or photographs, with the later often hand-coloured. These shows attracted huge audiences and were in demand throughout the world. They enabled the public to view scenes of far away places and subjects as diverse as the *Evils of Drink* and *Livingstone in Darkest Africa*. Lantern slides were suited to conveying the wonders of wilderness areas and many photographers held shows featuring their work.¹⁵⁵ According to film and sound archivist Chris Long, around 1870 the Stanley based photographer Thomas Fleet King became the first Tasmanian to produce lantern slides.¹⁵⁶ Later, John Watt Beattie became a master of the magic lantern show and his illustrated lectures attracted fee-paying audiences. He even sold sets of slides with explanatory notes to interstate and overseas buyers.¹⁵⁷

Both Stephen Spurling 2nd and Stephen Spurling 3rd produced lantern slides. Stephen 2nd was amongst those who contributed to lantern slide demonstrations held at meetings of the Northern Tasmanian Camera Club,¹⁵⁸ and his son presented his lantern slides to the public on behalf of the Tourist Association.¹⁵⁹ Stephen 3rd also lent slides to others to champion causes such as the establishment of national scenic reserves.¹⁶⁰ Although taken in black-and-white, on occasions slides were hand coloured for greater impact.

¹⁵⁴ Graham Wootton, 'Wilderness Photography', *Wild*, issue 97, July-Sep 2005, pp. 46-48.

¹⁵⁵ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, pp. 114-115.

¹⁵⁶ Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, p. 70.

¹⁵⁷ Margaret Tassell and David Wood, *Tasmanian Photographer, from the John Watt Beattie Collection* (Melbourne, 1981) p. 7; Hutton and Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, pp. 76-77.

¹⁵⁸ See for example, *Minute Book No. 2*, 20 March 1901, Northern Tasmanian Camera Club – hereafter NTCC (Held by the Launceston Local Studies Collection, Launceston Library).

¹⁵⁹ From an unidentified newspaper article in Stephen Spurling 3rd's scrapbook (Copy held by Christine Burgess).

¹⁶⁰ *Examiner*, 29 July 1921, p. 4 c. 8; Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, p. 75.



Collection of the State Library of Victoria

Stephen Spurling 3rd, *Cradle Mountain and Dove Lake*, 1922, glass lantern slide with hand colouring.

Panoramas or wide-angle photographs were another popular means of presenting views. The first wide-angle photographs date back to the 1840s when photographers discovered they could stitch a series of daguerreotypes together.¹⁶¹ A good example of this process is Martin Behrman's *San Francisco from Rincon Hill* (1851).¹⁶² In Australia, Sharp and Frith of Hobart Town used a process called the chromatype to produce one of the earliest known Australian panoramas. In early 1856, they advertised the sale of a panorama depicting Hobart Town from the domain.¹⁶³ Later, Charles Bayliss produced a number of large-scale panoramas including one of Sydney made in 1874 that measured ten metres in length. To make his panorama he used giant wet plates – the largest ever produced in the world.¹⁶⁴ While giant wet plates solved the problems associated with making enlargements, they proved cumbersome and difficult to use. Consequently, this innovation was short-lived.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Osterman, 'Panoramic', in Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, p. 100; Peter Hamilton, 'panoramic photography' in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, p. 467.

¹⁶² The Library of Congress, *A Brief History of Panoramic Photography*, at http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/panoramic_photo/pnhist1.html, 20/02/2008.

¹⁶³ *Tasmanian Daily News*, 18 January 1856, p. 5 c. 5; *Tasmanian Daily News*, 17 April 1856, p. 3 c. 3; Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, pp. 52-53; Sayers, *Australian art*, p. 67.

¹⁶⁴ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, pp. 53-54.

¹⁶⁵ Naef, *Era of exploration*, pp. 66-67.

During the wet plate era photographers could take panoramas with a standard camera by photographing scenes one section at time and mounting the pictures side-by-side. The alternative was to use Sutton's panoramic camera, which used curved colloidal glass plates and a wide-angle lens to produce panoramas.¹⁶⁶ The late nineteenth century saw the evolution of other cameras designed to take panoramic pictures. The Cirkut camera, for example, appeared in 1904. This camera allowed photographers to produce large-scale, 360-degree photographs. It proved popular with professional photographers who used it to produce cityscapes, landscapes and record notable events.¹⁶⁷

At the start of the twentieth century, photographer Melvin Vaniman literally went to great heights to achieve the ultimate panoramic images. An American by birth, Vaniman possibly used a Cirkut camera, and a self-designed rotating camera, to take panoramas from the tops of buildings, ships masts or even specially constructed poles. When these were not available, he took his camera aloft in a balloon. Vaniman arrived in Australia in 1903, and during his stay he travelled widely, taking photographs in several states. His 1904 panorama of Sydney was perhaps the first such wide-angle image of a city ever taken from a balloon. That same year, Vaniman also visited Tasmania and during his stay he took twelve panoramas of various parts of the state.¹⁶⁸

The Spurlings produced a number of panoramas. Perhaps Stephen 2nd's most important panorama was his 1886, 360° image of Launceston. At the time this was the largest panorama ever made of the town.¹⁶⁹ His son also produced panoramas. Usually he took a series of individual images, which he stitched together; but some, such as the image below, were taken with a specialised camera – possibly a Cirkut camera.

¹⁶⁶ Osterman, 'Panoramic', in Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, p. 100.

¹⁶⁷ Andrew Davidhazy, 'panoramic photography' and Bob Rose, 'The History of the Twentieth Century Camera' in Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, pp. 338, 772; Hamilton, 'panoramic photography' in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, p. 467.

¹⁶⁸ Alan Davies, *A Different Perspective: Vaniman, the acrobatic photographer* (NSW, 2005); Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, pp. 115-116.

¹⁶⁹ See discussion in Chapter 3.



Collection of the National Library of Australia

Stephen Spurling 3rd, *King Island – Currie Harbour panorama*, date unknown, gelatin silver photograph.

During the wet plate era, landscape photography was difficult and dangerous. This changed in 1871 when the English doctor Richard Leach Maddox invented the gelatin dry plate.¹⁷⁰ Now it was possible to prepare plates up to two years prior to exposure and postpone development until the photographer returned to the studio. Dry plates also obviated the need for photographers to travel with hazardous chemicals or set up developing tents in the bush.¹⁷¹ These plates arrived in Australia in the late 1870s, and Stephen Spurling 2nd was possibly the first Australian photographer to import them.¹⁷² Since dry plates were subject to damage during the sea voyage from Europe, by 1880 the Adelaide-based firm, Phillip Marchant had started producing Australian-made dry plates. The Melbourne-based firm Baker and Rouse followed four years later,¹⁷³ and ready sensitised printing papers also became available around this time.¹⁷⁴ These innovations meant it was easier to photograph landscapes. In addition, shorter shutter speeds enabled photographers such as Englishman Eadweard Muybridge to expand his experiments photographing moving objects.¹⁷⁵ Stephen 2nd was also fascinated by this photographic challenge. By 1880, he was experimenting with an improvised shutter-system to photograph yachts on the Tamar River.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁰ Osterman, 'Gelatin Emulsions and the Modern Era', 'Dry Plates' in Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, pp. 33-34, 71; Gernsheim, *A Concise History of Photography*, pp. 17-18.

¹⁷¹ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, pp. 62-64.

¹⁷² See discussion in Chapter 3.

¹⁷³ Anne-Marie Willis, *Picturing Australia: a history of photography* (North Ryde, NSW, 1988) p. 75.

¹⁷⁴ Kingsley, 'POP (printing-out paper)' in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, p. 510; Peres, 'Advances in Photographic Technology', in Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, p. 6.

¹⁷⁵ Newhall, *The History of Photography*, pp. 117-123; Gernsheim, *A Concise History of Photography*, pp. 70-71; Naef, *Era of exploration*, pp. 67-69, 176.

¹⁷⁶ See discussion in Chapter 3.

By the end of the nineteenth century, improvements in printing processes made it possible for newspapers and magazines to mass-produce high quality photographic images. Governments realised the potential for photographs to attract visitors and set up tourist departments to organise campaigns.¹⁷⁷ Photographs depicting landscapes appeared as postcards, posters and on stamps. The public bought framed prints for their homes, and businesses bought enlargements to adorn their walls. Scenic photography had arrived and had an eager market.¹⁷⁸ These technological improvements coincided with Stephen Spurling 3rd commencing work in his father's studio. Father and son capitalised on the increased demand for view photography and sought to expand their range of images. In addition, the Launceston-based *Weekly Courier*, which featured high-definition images, provided an outlet for publishing their photographs.¹⁷⁹

Noted Australian photographers of this era include the Sydney-based photographer Charles Henry Kerry, who in 1888 was one of the first Australian photographers to use magnesium flashlights.¹⁸⁰ Then in 1891, he photographed the interiors of the Jenolan and Yarrangobilly Caves.¹⁸¹ Two years later, in 1893, Stephen Spurling 2nd and 3rd used magnesium lamps to take images of the Mole Creek Caves.¹⁸² However, the earliest photographs taken with magnesium lighting dates back 1867, when the American photographer Timothy H O'Sullivan took images of the Gould and Curry Mine.¹⁸³

Other Australian photographers at this time include Nicholas John Caire and John William Lindt. Both began their photographic careers during the wet plate era, and later moved to dry plates. According to the academic Leigh Astbury, both

¹⁷⁷ Robson, *A History of Tasmania, Volume II*, p. 285.

¹⁷⁸ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, p. 64.

¹⁷⁹ See discussions in Chapters 3, 4, 6.

¹⁸⁰ David P Millar, *Charles Kerry's Federation Australia* (Darlinghurst, NSW, 1981) p. 10; Astbury, *City bushmen*, p. 46.

¹⁸¹ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, pp. 65-69; Macleay Museum, *Historic Photograph Collection*, at <http://www.usyd.edu.au/macleay/kerry.htm>, 22/08/2006, p. 1; Millar, *Charles Kerry's Federation Australia*, p. 13.

¹⁸² Photos [Stephen Spurling 2nd], 'A visit to the New Caves at Mole Creek', *Examiner*, 15 April 1893, p. 3 c. 6. See discussion in Chapter 3.

¹⁸³ Naef, *Era of exploration*, p. 67.

‘became significant exponents of Australian pastoral figure subjects’.¹⁸⁴ However, today, these two photographers are more usually associated with their images featuring forest vegetation. Lindt sold over 25 000 prints of the Black Spur region in Victoria, and Caire’s photographs of fern glades became classics of this popular nineteenth century motif.¹⁸⁵



Collection of the National Library of Australia

Nicholas Caire (1837-1914), *Fern Terrace on the River Watt, near Mount Munday [Victoria]*, c. 1890s, albumen photograph, 13.2 x 18.5 cm.

In Tasmania, Stephen Spurling 2nd and 3rd found many opportunities to photograph ferns. Favourite locations included the now ‘significantly modified’ Silver Falls at Fern Tree Bower, Mount Wellington in the south,¹⁸⁶ and Denison Gorge near Launceston, in the north. Such images had much in common with the picturesque, and, according to academic Julia Peck, ‘photographers of the nineteenth century had a profound impact on the picturesque representation of Australia’.¹⁸⁷ For the Spurlings, and photographers such as Lindt and Caire, the growing tide of nationalism also played an important role in their choice of scenes

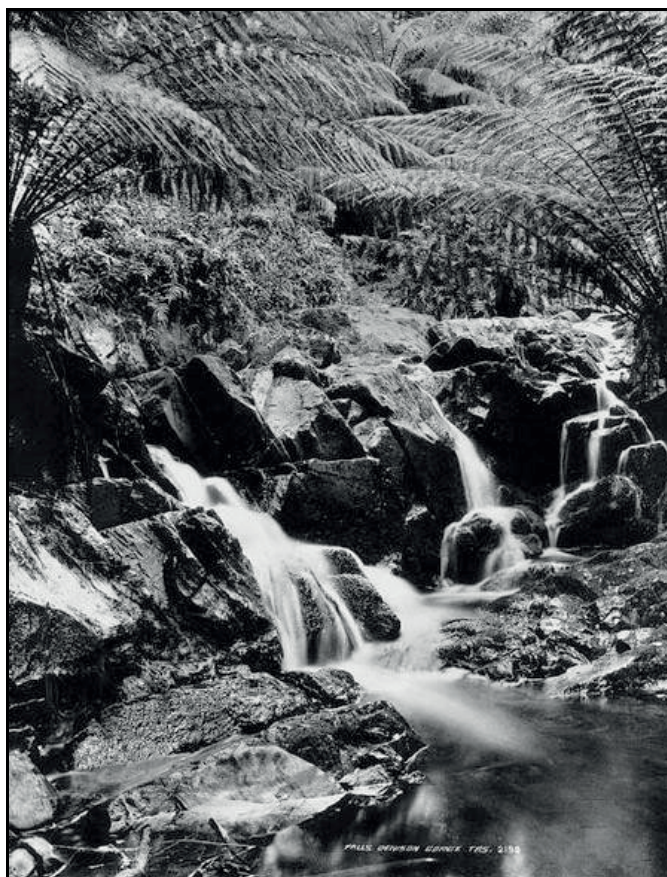
¹⁸⁴ Astbury, *City bushmen*, pp. 44, 52.

¹⁸⁵ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, pp. 70- 79; Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, pp. 102-124, 276-279; Crombie (ed.), *Flagship: Australian Art in the National Gallery of Victoria*, pp. 15, 21; Ennis, *Intersections*, pp. 86, 90; Julia Peck, ‘The Making of the Australian Landscape: Photographic Contributions to the Construction of a Nation from New South Wales and Victoria 1870-1917’, (PhD thesis, University of Wales, 2008) pp. 136-137; Sayers, *Australian art*, pp. 95-96.

¹⁸⁶ A McConnell and L Scripps, *Focus on the Fringe: Layered use and meanings in a natural context: Wellington Park Historic Heritage Inventory & Audit Project: Volume 2 – Inventory, Place Audit & Plan/ Strategy Review* (Hobart, Tasmania, 2005) p. 70. See discussion in Chapter 3.

¹⁸⁷ Peck, ‘The Making of the Australian Landscape’, p. 349.

and their depictions of the unique flora and fauna.¹⁸⁸ Although the images above and below both depict ferns and water, the Caire picture exudes tranquility, while the Spurling image, which features water splashing over rocks, is more dynamic.



Collection of the National Library of Australia

Stephen Spurling 3rd, *Falls – Denison Gorge*, c. 1920, gelatin silver photograph.

For most of the first century of mechanical image making, landscape photography was something of an endurance test. In these early years, an outdoor photographic excursion involved lugging fragile glass plates and cumbersome cameras. However, this changed with the invention of roll film. While the first experimental film dates from the late nineteenth century, these prototypes were fragile and tended to curl. Non-curling, celluloid film became a reality in 1889. Even though it was highly flammable and gave off a poisonous gas when ignited, it was a major improvement over earlier films.¹⁸⁹ By 1913, roll film had started to

¹⁸⁸ Ennis, *Intersections*, p. 87; Peck, 'The Making of the Australian Landscape', p. 352.

¹⁸⁹ Peres, 'Advances in Photographic Technology', in Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, p. 6; Wilder, 'roll-film', in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, p. 543; Gernsheim, *A Concise History of Photography*, p. 18.

replace glass plates, although glass plates remained popular with professional photographers for many more years.¹⁹⁰ During this period a number of major innovations took place. These included the marketing of the 35 mm camera in 1925, and the introduction of safety film some twenty-four years later.¹⁹¹ Roll film made still photography easier. The cameras were smaller and did not require a tripod. Roll film also allowed photographers to extend Muybridge's early experiments and create films of moving objects.

The first movie film, invented by the French chemists Louis and August Lumière, was *Le Cinématograph*, which opened in Paris in 1895.¹⁹² One year later Maurice Sestier shot the first Australian movie film, and in 1899 Joseph Perry filmed the world's first motion picture drama in Melbourne. Most early movies were fictional, but governments soon recognised the potential of movies to attract tourists. For example, in 1900 Perry, at the request of the Victorian Government, made a series of movies featuring holiday resorts.¹⁹³ Stephen Spurling 3rd also experimented with early movie film. In 1912 he exhibited a series of cinematograph pictures, each around 300 feet long at a meeting of the Northern Tasmanian Camera Club.¹⁹⁴ The following year he made the first known movie film¹⁹⁵ of the region north of Lake St Clair.¹⁹⁶ Around this time the Tasmanian Tourist Department purchased some Spurling movies for interstate audiences. These movies proved so popular they eventually disintegrated.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁰ For example, Ansel Adams continued to use glass plates for many years, believing they produced better negatives. Alinder, *Ansel Adams*, p. 61.

¹⁹¹ Peres, 'Advances in Photographic Technology' and Rose, 'The History of the Twentieth Century Camera' in Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, pp. 11, 774. When Ansel Adams studio caught fire in 1937, over 5000 highly flammable, nitrate-based negatives were destroyed. Alinder, *Ansel Adams*, p. 143.

¹⁹² Romer, 'Lumière, Auguste (1862-1954), Lumière, Louis (1864-1948)' in Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, p. 129.

¹⁹³ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, p. 115-125.

¹⁹⁴ *Minute Book No.4*, NTCC, newspaper article pasted into *Minute Book*, 16 October 1912.

¹⁹⁵ Margaret Giordano cites Herb King as the possible photographer of the 'first film documentary taken of Cradle Mountain Reserve', c. 1926. Margaret Giordano, *A Man and a Mountain, the Story of Gustav Weindorfer* (Launceston 1987) p. 85. Stephen Spurling 3rd's film of the region just to the south of Cradle Mountain predates this film by some thirteen years.

¹⁹⁶ S Spurling, Jnr, 'Tasmanian Scenes', *Harringtons' Photographic Journal*, v. 30, 2 May 1921, p. 13 c. 1.

¹⁹⁷ Nina 'Social World', *Weekly Courier*, 31 August 1916, p. 27 c. 3-4.

Another major innovation in photographic history was the invention of colour photography. Although it had its origins in the three-colour principle, originally espoused in 1801, successful colour photography did not become a reality until the mid-1930s. Prior to this, photographers had hand-coloured black-and-white images to give the illusion of a colour image.¹⁹⁸ This practice fell into some disrepute with group f/64 photographers.¹⁹⁹ Ansel Adams, in particular, believed 'black-and-white was photography's true dominion'.²⁰⁰

Colour photography and black-and-white photography might appear to be in competition with each other, but according to photo-historian Karl Steinorth they are 'separate instruments for the achievement of different aims'.²⁰¹ While all three generations of Spurling photographers hand-coloured some of their black-and-white images, colour photography only became practical during Stephen 3rd's lifetime. Although there is evidence he experimented with this new technology, there is only one known example of his colour photography still in existence.²⁰²

Many of the photographic innovations that occurred in the early part of the twentieth century were in response to the demands of the world wars. During the First World War the need for aerial photographs as an aid in reconnaissance and mapping led to the development of smaller cameras with faster lenses and improved film quality.²⁰³ Following the cessation of hostilities, Stephen Spurling 3rd took the first aerial photographs of Launceston in November 1919.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁸ Peres, 'Advances in Photographic Technology' and Jon A Kapecki, 'Color Photography', in Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, pp. 9, 692-700; Graham Saxby, 'colour reproductive principles' and Roger W Hicks, 'hand colouring of photographs' in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, pp. 132-134, 268-269.

¹⁹⁹ The f/64 photographic movement is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

²⁰⁰ Alinder, *Ansel Adams*, p. 41.

²⁰¹ Karl Steinorth, 'Edward Weston: Color as Form' in Thomas Buchsteiner, *Edward, Cole, Kim Weston: three generations of American photography* (Switzerland, c. 1995) p. 13.

²⁰² Stephen Spurling's son, Ted Spurling of Devonport, refers to a colour photograph of his sister Hazel and himself in his notes. Original glass autochrome negative currently held by Christine Burgess. See Chapter 6.

²⁰³ Jens Jaeger and Lenman, 'military photography' in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, p. 414.

²⁰⁴ S Spurling Jun., 'Launceston from the Air: The Photographer tells his Story', *Weekly Courier*, 20 November 1919, p. 36 c. 3-4; Advocate, 13 December 1969, p. 18.

The Second World War brought more photographic advances and employment for photographers. Some photographers worked for the military, and others recorded the conflict for press agencies.²⁰⁵ At the same time civilian photographers faced restrictions; certain areas were off-limits and photographers had to seek permission to photograph any area of military significance.²⁰⁶

For most of the population the intervening depression years meant hardship and social upheaval. However, not all sectors of the economy faced a downturn and some photographers found their services were still in demand. For example, in America the government embarked upon a program to create an archive of photographs depicting the era's problems and in doing so created employment for photographers.²⁰⁷ In Australia, the society portrait photographer, Ruth Hollick found the depression had little effect on her list of clients.²⁰⁸ Likewise, the Australian adventurer and photographer, Frank Hurley continued his life unabated. In 1929 he was the official photographer on Sir Douglas Mawson's trip to Antarctica. The pair made a second trip in 1930. On his return to Sydney, Hurley could afford to rent a family home, with a commanding view of the harbour, at Rose Bay. Although 'business was not what it used to be', Hurley agreed to produce a series of films for Greater Union Theatres Ltd. The arrangement lasted eight years.²⁰⁹ Pictorial photographer, Harold Cazneaux had a slightly different experience. At the beginning of the depression, his business stalled, but then BHP commissioned him to photograph their steel works in Newcastle (New South Wales) and in Whyalla (South Australia).²¹⁰

In Launceston, the Spurlings found their business was relatively unaffected by the harsh realities of the era. Somewhat ironically, while many battled to subsist,

²⁰⁵ Jaeger and Lenman, 'military photography', Lenman 'war photography' in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, pp. 414, 668.

²⁰⁶ Lenman 'war photography' in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, p. 667.

²⁰⁷ Newhall, *The History of Photography*, p. 238; Alinder, *Ansel Adams*, p. 227.

²⁰⁸ Olga Tsara, 'Seeing the light', *State Library of Victoria News*, no. 27, November 2004 - February 2005, pp. 2-3.

²⁰⁹ Alasdair McGregor, *Frank Hurley: a photographer's life* (Camberwell, Victoria, 2004) pp. 301, 313, 315-327.

²¹⁰ *Australian Observer: the photographs of Harold Cazneaux, 1878-1953* (National Library of Australia, 1996), at <http://www.nla.gov.au/exhibitions/caz/cat.html>, 10/08/2006, p. 7.

those who could afford to purchase scenic photographs and camera equipment before the depression were still able to do so.²¹¹

The technological advances that occurred during the first century of mechanical image making meant that photographers had a variety of ways of depicting landscapes – without the artists’ brush and pen. But what conventions should photographers adopt? Should they emulate the artists, or seek different approaches that fully utilised of the possibilities of this new technology?

Photographic representations of landscapes

Over the years, the ways in which photographers have represented the landscape have changed. These changes have been due to improved technology, as well as changing aesthetics and attitudes towards the representation of scenery. However, the most significant changes have occurred when photographers recognised their medium could evolve differently, without dictation from artistic conceits and trends.

Many early landscape photographers abided by the conventions of eighteenth and nineteenth century landscape painting.²¹² They produced picturesque images that typically featured a foreground framed by vegetation, a middle ground with some object of interest and a background to give a sense of distance. Such structural features were particularly important in stereographs as they helped to create a three dimensional effect.²¹³ However, landscape photography evolved somewhat differently in different countries. In Europe photographers tended to focus on beautiful and picturesque scenery. In America the emphasis was on recording sublime images of rugged and untamed landscapes.²¹⁴ According to

²¹¹ Hazel McCammon (née Spurling), Recollections as told to Christine Burgess.

²¹² Gary D Sampson, ‘Unmasking the colonial picturesque’, in Eleanor M Hight and Gary D Sampson (eds), *Colonialist photography: imag(in)ing race and place* (London, 2002) pp. 89-91.

²¹³ Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, pp. 200-202.

²¹⁴ Stephenson, *New Landscapes*, pp. 4-5; Alinder, *Ansel Adams*, pp. 33-34; Willis, *Picturing Australia: a history of photography*, p. 60.

Weston Naef, many early daguerreotypists in particular found it difficult to represent landscapes as idealised and romantic.²¹⁵

Glass plate photography brought more possibilities and some photographers, like a number of artists, included small figures in the landscape. These figures could serve as a 'key compositional element' to emphasise the grandeur of the surroundings and man's fallibility, or as in the case of the artist Eugene von Guérard, as 'detached from the views before them'.²¹⁶ Sometimes, photographers emulated the artist Conrad Martens and depicted humans as being 'at ease within a wilderness landscape and enjoying its splendours'.²¹⁷

During the second half of the nineteenth century, Australian photographers experimented with ways of depicting their landscape. Some photographers focussed on showing man and nature in harmony. Their images depicted occasional signs of human occupation: perhaps a bridge or tract of cultivated land and beyond that a background of forests or cliffs.²¹⁸ Another motif, used by photographers such as Charles Bayliss, was to provide an entry point to invite the viewer into the photograph. By including 'paths, stairways, jetties or boats in the foreground', Bayliss provided a means of conveying the viewer literally and figuratively into another place or time.²¹⁹ Other Australian photographers felt restricted in their landscape photography by lack 'of seductive charms offered by other foreign lands'²²⁰ and by the harshness of the Antipodean light. Observers complained that the clarity of the atmosphere, combined with the intensity of the sun's rays, made 'the high lights so glaring, and the shadows so black, that the effect is generally painful to the eye, because it presents an abruptness and violence of contrast which does not exist in nature'.²²¹

²¹⁵ Naef, *Era of exploration*, p. 15.

²¹⁶ Ennis, *Intersections*, p. 92; Stephenson, *Beautiful Lies*, p. 4; Haygarth, *Booming Tasmania*, pp. 11-12; Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, p. 78.

²¹⁷ Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, p. 75. See Chapter 5.

²¹⁸ Ennis, *Intersections*, p. 84; Haygarth, *Booming Tasmania*, p. 12.

²¹⁹ Ennis, *Intersections*, p. 95.

²²⁰ Robert Holden, *Photography in colonial Australia: the mechanical eye and illustrated book* (NSW, 1988) p. 54.

²²¹ 'Fine Art Publications', *Argus*, 29 November 1873, p. 9 c. 4.

While most photographers concentrated on obtaining clear, focussed images, another school of photography had a very different approach. This approach originated in the mid-1800s, and the debates as to whether or not photography was an art form. In 1869, the photographer Henry Peach Robinson wrote a book entitled *Pictorial Effect in Photography*, in which he contended that 'photographic art should imitate the conventions of academic painting'.²²² Although many wet plate photographers had produced aesthetically pleasing images, the invention of the dry plate and the availability of carbon and bromoil prints allowed photographers new freedoms. They could now move beyond the problems of technical production and explore their medium. At the same time, the influence of the impressionist artists began affecting how photographers depicted their subjects.²²³ Some photographers started manipulating their photographs and searched for meaning and depth. Known as pictorialism, the movement became popular in England and United States in the late 1880s and early 1890s.²²⁴

During this period, the Australian John Kauffmann travelled to Europe and discovered the work of the pictorialists. On his return he displayed some of his photographs at an international exhibition held in Adelaide in 1898. His pictures reflected his belief that photographs were works of art. He used soft, diffused images to replace the stark realism and emphasis on sharp focus of earlier photographs.²²⁵ One of the visitors to Kauffmann's exhibition was the Australian photographer Harold Cazneaux. The experience of seeing the pictorial photographs left him 'spellbound and inspired, here was a new beauty beyond anything [he] had dreamed of in terms of the camera'.²²⁶ Cazneaux subsequently

²²² Kingsley 'pictorialism', 'Robinson, Henry Peach (1830-1901)' in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, pp. 500, 541.

²²³ Gernsheim, *A Concise History of Photography*, pp. 76-77; Alan Davies, *An Eye for Photography: The Camera in Australia* (Victoria, 2004) pp. 150-151; *Australian Observer: the photographs of Harold Cazneaux, 1878-1953*, p. 2.

²²⁴ Osterman, 'Pictorialism', in Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, p. 103; Kingsley, 'pictorialism', in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, p. 500; Alinder, *Ansel Adams*, pp. 37-38.

²²⁵ *Australian Observer: the photographs of Harold Cazneaux, 1878-1953*, p. 2; Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, pp. 148-149; Gael Newton, *Australian pictorial photography: a survey of art photography from 1898 to 1938 organised by the Art Gallery of New South Wales* (Sydney, 1979) pp. 4-6.

²²⁶ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, p. 151.

moved from Adelaide to Sydney to work for Freeman's photography firm. While required to produce traditional styles of photography at work, Cazneaux also built up a private collection of pictorial photographs. He did not limit himself to any particular subject – his works included portraits, seascapes and landscapes. Then in 1909 he created history when he held the first solo photographic exhibition in Australia.²²⁷ Reviewers received Cazneaux's works with rapture, and lauded '[t]he great *artistic* possibilities of photography'.²²⁸ Later, when he held an exhibition in London critics hailed him as ranking 'with the few outstanding workers of the world in pictorial photography'.²²⁹

Many early pictorialists began their experimental photography in regions of diffused sunlight. However, on mainland Australia, and in parts of America, the light was stronger and required a different response. In 1916 six Sydney photographers founded 'The Sydney Camera Circle'. Their aim was to 'advance pictorial photography and to show our own Australia in terms of sunlight rather than those of greyness and dismal shadows'.²³⁰ As the light in Tasmania was neither the diffused illumination of Europe, nor the intense solar rays of the mainland, photographers here evolved their own response to pictorialism. For Launceston photographer, and ex-Spurling apprentice, Frederick Vaudry Robinson pictorialism opened up a new world.²³¹ When he held an exhibition of his work in Sydney in 1928, Cazneaux enthused that it was a 'revelation to pictorialists as to what is possible in the hands of a versatile artistic worker'.²³² Robinson then held an exhibition in London, but with his critics in Australia becoming increasingly vocal, he limited further displays of his work. Although the Spurlings did not fully embrace the movement, Stephen 3rd experimented with pictorialism, and some of his images reflect pictorial influences.²³³

²²⁷ Willis, *Picturing Australia: a history of photography*, p. 136.

²²⁸ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, p. 152.

²²⁹ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, p. 152.

²³⁰ Letter from Harold Cazneaux to Jack Cato (Undated) as quoted in *Australian Observer: the photographs of Harold Cazneaux, 1878-1953*, p. 5.

²³¹ 'F Vaudry Robinson', 'Biographies of the Photographers' in Gael Newton, *Silver and Grey: Fifty Years of Australian Photography, 1900-1950* (Australia, 1980).

²³² As quoted in Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, p. 97.

²³³ See discussion in Chapter 6.

Early in twentieth century photographers, such as the American Alfred Stieglitz, started to question the philosophies expounded by the pictorialists. Then in 1922, Edward Henry Weston travelled to New York City to meet Stieglitz, and fellow photographers Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand for discussions about his experiments with straight photography.²³⁴ His new images were sharp and focussed, ‘... rendering the very substance and quintessence of the *thing itself*’.²³⁵ They were a complete departure from Weston’s previous, soft-focus pictorial photographs. Before long he rejected pictorial photography in favour of his new approach and in 1932 he collaborated with some other photographers to launch the ‘group f/64’. This group aimed to produce realistic photographs, rather than the blurred artistic images of the pictorial movement, and to present the world as it was, without embellishment. They achieved this by using an aperture of f/64, which gave a maximum clarity and depth of field. The rise in popularity of the group f/64 marked the demise of the pictorial movement.²³⁶

Another related influence on taste and style during this period was the Art Deco movement. This movement, which incorporated both ‘a return to tradition and simultaneously celebrated the mechanised, modern world ... affected all forms of design ... [including] photography’.²³⁷ Many photographers who embraced this movement, such as American Man Ray, Englishman Cecil Beaton, and Australian Olive Cotton, were more interested in portraiture or studies of inanimate objects, rather than landscape work. However, the underlying principles of producing works that explored the medium and challenged accepted values had a significant influence on all branches of photography. The interplay of light and shadow, of reflective materials, unexpected camera angles and emphasis on composition all played a part in creating images that challenged and inspired the viewer.²³⁸

²³⁴ Julia Galandi-Pascual, ‘Weston, Edward (1886-1958) in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, p. 678; Newhall, *The History of Photography*, pp. 150- 197.

²³⁵ Nancy Newhall (ed.), *The daybooks of Edward Weston*, v. 1 (Millerton, NY, 1973) p. 55.

²³⁶ Buchsteiner, *Edward, Cole, Kim Weston*, p. 7; Tim Troy, ‘Groupf.64’, in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, pp. 264-265; Robert Hirsch, ‘Group f/64 (1932-1935)’ and Garie Waltzer, ‘Weston, Edward (1886-1958)’ in Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, pp. 256-257, 293.

²³⁷ Ghislaine Wood, *Art Deco 1910-1939* (Melbourne, Victoria, 2008) p. 21.

²³⁸ Wood, *Art Deco 1910-1939*, pp. 147, 184-185, 201-203, 267, 277.

During the first century of photography there were three distinct approaches to photographing landscapes. Initially, the problems of producing an image consumed the photographer, but before long photographers started to explore the medium as an art form. Later, photographers challenged these ideas and created images that showed the world as it was. Over the ensuing decades, some photographers started to depict images of scenery under threat of human destruction. They also discovered images could be used for a didactic or political purpose. Typical subjects included lakes, rivers and vegetation rather than towering mountains and deep chasms, which had a greater sense of permanency. Most photographers also excluded human figures from the images – they represented the invaders, the saboteurs.²³⁹ The era of wilderness photography had arrived, but its origins dated back to the very earliest days of photography.

Wilderness photography and the conservation movement

In his book, *The Colonial Earth* Tim Bonyhady states: '[t]here were literally no 'conservationists' in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The term was coined only in the twentieth century'.²⁴⁰ While this term might be a construct of the twentieth century, photographic images of wild places date back to the earliest days of photography, and the use of such images in promoting environmental causes also dates back to the nineteenth century. Prime examples include the campaigns to establish scenic reserves in America. In the early 1860s, Carleton Watkins' photographs of the Yosemite Valley 'provided the convincing visual proof that prompted Congress to recognize Yosemite's importance and the need for its preservation'.²⁴¹ In 1872 William Henry Jackson's photographs of Yellowstone played a similar role in having that area proclaimed a National Park.²⁴² Later, in the 1930s Ansel Adams used his photographs to further the cause of conserving the Kings Canyon. His campaign proved successful and in 1940, this

²³⁹ Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, pp. 294, 295, 317.

²⁴⁰ Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, p. 26.

²⁴¹ Alinder, *Ansel Adams*, p. 32; Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, p. 195.

²⁴² Newhall, *The History of Photography*, p. 100; Stephenson, *Beautiful Lies*, p. 3.

area became a National Park.²⁴³ Likewise, in the mid-1950s, during a struggle to prevent a proposed dam in Dinosaur National Monument, Utah, campaigners found '[p]hotographs – the more extraordinary the better' were the best means of publicising the issues.²⁴⁴

The success of the Yosemite photographs inspired Eccleston du Faur, who was the chief draughtsman for the New South Wales Government, to initiate a strategy to draw attention to the attractions of the Australian bush. In 1875 he organised a retreat for artists and photographers to Grose Valley in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales. The artist William Charles Piguenit and photographer Joseph Bischoff were amongst those invited. However, du Faur's enthusiasm was somewhat over zealous. In order to open up vistas, he arranged for the clearing of vegetation and some of Bischoff's panoramas included this desecration.²⁴⁵ Other attempts to use photographs to publicise issues followed. In 1893, Archibald Campbell and R S Sugars displayed their lantern slides of Dandenong forests in an effort to prevent farming in that area.²⁴⁶ Somewhat paradoxically, five years earlier Nicholas Caire's photographs of the Mt Buffalo area had proved useful during a campaign to raise funds for the construction of an access road.²⁴⁷

In Tasmania, photographs have played a role in the promotion of environmental issues, but with varying degrees of success. According to Tim Bonyhady, in 1904 John Watt Beattie provided the civic-minded Quaker, Joseph Francis Mather with some lantern slides to dissuade the government from selling part of Freycinet Peninsula on Tasmania's east coast.²⁴⁸ Two years later, when Beattie presented an illustrated paper to the Royal Society, which pointed out the need for appropriate land-management of this area, his pleas went unheeded.²⁴⁹ Then in 1908 Beattie 'turned his photographs into a powerful weapon in defence of the environment'

²⁴³ Alinder, *Ansel Adams*, pp. 105-106; Stephenson, *Beautiful Lies*, p. 4.

²⁴⁴ Adams, *Beauty in Photography*, p. 105.

²⁴⁵ Newton, *Shades of Light*, p. 56; Wootton, 'Wilderness Photography', p. 46; Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, pp. 194 -198; Sayers, *Australian Art*, pp. 94 -95.

²⁴⁶ Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, p. 8.

²⁴⁷ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, p. 78.

²⁴⁸ Bonyhady, 'The Artist as an Activist', p. 24.

²⁴⁹ Bonyhady, 'The Artist as an Activist', p. 24.

when he used his images to illustrate his arguments in favour of enlarging the reserve bordering the banks of the Gordon River on the west coast.²⁵⁰ His polemics were those of the economic rationalist. He believed tourism was the best way to promote the region's development.²⁵¹ Beattie evidently saw no conflict in his arguments, even though his calls for preserving the environment seem contrary to his penchant for either chopping down or repositioning vegetation to enhance the artistic arrangement of his photographs.²⁵²

Although many writers cite Beattie as the force behind the movement for the Gordon River reserve, he was not the only Tasmanian campaigning for the preservation of this region. On 25 August 1908, a deputation from the Northern Tasmanian Tourist Association met with the Premier, J W Evans, to discuss 'the preservation of the banks of Gordon and King Rivers, so that the beauties of these two splendid streams and magnificent tourist assets might be adequately protected'.²⁵³ A newspaper report of the meeting states the deputation 'desired to back up the Southern Association in its advocacy of the reservation of the Gordon'.²⁵⁴ This article does not mention Beattie's involvement in the issue. Despite the Premier's assurances to this deputation, the government of the day reneged on its promise to enact legislation to extend the reserve.²⁵⁵

There are others examples where, despite photographs of areas of natural beauty, calls to protect these regions proved unsuccessful. In the early years of European settlement, Lake St Clair, in the central highlands, was a popular destination for artists and photographers.²⁵⁶ However, the wealth of images depicting the lake's attractions failed to prevent the building of a dam and pumping station in 1937. The subsequent variations in the lake's water level had a catastrophic effect on the surrounding vegetation.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁰ Bonyhady, 'The Artist as an Activist', pp. 22, 26.

²⁵¹ Bonyhady, 'The Artist as an Activist', p. 26.

²⁵² Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, pp. 201, 210; Ennis, *Intersections*, p. 92.

²⁵³ *Examiner*, 22 September 1908, p. 5.

²⁵⁴ *Mercury*, 26 August 1908, p. 3.

²⁵⁵ Bonyhady, 'The Artist as an Activist', p. 30; Tassell and Wood, *Tasmanian Photographer*, p. 9; Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, p. 165; Haynes, 'From Habitat to Wilderness', p. 277.

²⁵⁶ Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, pp. 111, 119, 123, 151, 154, 160, 163-164, 177.

²⁵⁷ Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, p. 276; Chris Long, 'Tasmania's Wild Western Rivers', *This Australia*, v. 2, no. 4, Spring 1983, p. 40; Hutton and Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, p. 75; Roger Lupton, *Lifeflood: Tasmania's hydro power* (Edgecliff,

In 1921, Stephen Spurling 3rd had described the lake as being particularly photogenic, and he deplored the changes to this once pristine environment.²⁵⁸ The lesson of Lake St Clair went unheeded. Lake Pedder, in the state's southwest, was once renowned for its unique quartz beach, which appeared in summer when the water level receded. This lake was the subject of numerous paintings and photographs, including some particularly memorable images taken by the Tasmanian photographer, Olegas Truchanas.²⁵⁹ In an attempt to alert the public to the beauty of the area, in the late 1960s Truchanas gave audiovisual presentations at the Hobart Town Hall. These events proved so popular 'there was standing-room only ... and many hundreds were turned away'.²⁶⁰ Despite impassioned protests, in 1972 the lake was flooded as part of a hydro-electric power development.²⁶¹

Other campaigns were more successful. Today Gustav Weindorfer's name is closely associated with agitation to have Cradle Mountain, in Tasmania's central highlands, declared a National Park. Initially inspired by Stephen Spurling 3rd's accounts of his photographic expedition to the region, Weindorfer first visited Cradle Mountain in 1909.²⁶² He returned the following year and ascended Cradle Mountain. On reaching the summit, he stretched out his arms and proclaimed, '[t]his must be a National Park for the people for all time'.²⁶³ Years of campaigning followed. Photographs and lantern slides (including a number taken by Stephen 3rd) played a major role in the crusade.²⁶⁴

NSW, c. 2000) pp. 119, 163.

²⁵⁸ Spurling, Jnr, 'Tasmanian Scenes', p. 13.

²⁵⁹ Max Angus, *The World of Olegas Truchanas* (Hobart, 1975) pp. 88-113.

²⁶⁰ Wootton, 'Wilderness Photography', p. 47; Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, p. 279; Flanagan and Pybus, 'Green Images', p. 160.

²⁶¹ Stephenson, *Beautiful Lies*, p. 5; Mulligan and Hill, *Ecological Pioneers*, p. 69.

²⁶² Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, p. 166. Stephen Spurling 3rd's articles and photographs appeared in the *Weekly Courier* in May and June 1905. For further discussion see Chapter 5.

²⁶³ R E Smith, 'Birth of the Northern National Park', *Examiner*, 7 November 1936, p. 11 c. 6-7; Haygarth, *A View to Cradle*, p. 124; Giordano, *A Man and a Mountain*, p. 31.

²⁶⁴ *Examiner*, 29 July 1921, p. 4 c. 8.

Weindorfer's dream became a reality in 1922, with the creation of a 'Scenic Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary'. His vision lived on, and in 1982 the Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park achieved World Heritage status.²⁶⁵

Around seventy years after the tourist associations, John Watt Beattie and others had campaigned to preserve the wild rivers on Tasmania's west coast, the subject re-emerged as an issue.²⁶⁶ In the late 1970s, the state government supported plans to dam the Gordon and Franklin Rivers as part of a hydro-electric power development.²⁶⁷ The battle that ensued to save these rivers proved lengthy and bitter. Strategies included political lobbying, protests, blockades and the publication of photographs in posters, books and pamphlets.²⁶⁸ According to Roslynn Haynes, 'the Franklin campaign was the showcase of Tasmania's new generation of outstanding nature photographers'.²⁶⁹

Today, Peter Dombrovskis' image, *Rock Island Bend* is synonymous with this campaign.²⁷⁰ Dombrovskis' photograph appeared as a full-page advertisement in newspapers prior to the 1983 federal elections under the caption '[c]ould you vote for a party that will destroy this?'.²⁷¹ Senator John Button described the words and photograph to be 'the most powerful political advertisement he had ever seen'.²⁷² According to writers Richard Flanagan and Cassandra Pybus, this image is 'the most famous photograph ever taken of the Franklin River'.²⁷³ With such emotive appeals to the national psyche, the campaign proved successful. The dam proposal was defeated, and the area became listed as a World Heritage site.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁵ John Chapman, *Cradle Mountain Lake St Clair National Park* (Hobart, 1980) p.10; Giordano, *A Man and a Mountain*, pp. 65-68, 117.

²⁶⁶ Bonyhady, 'The Artist as an Activist', p. 22.

²⁶⁷ Robson, *A History of Tasmania, Volume II*, pp. 558-559; Lupton, *Lifeblood*, p. 303.

²⁶⁸ Robson, *A History of Tasmania, Volume II*, pp. 560-579; Flanagan and Pybus, 'Green Images', p. 157.

²⁶⁹ Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, p. 282.

²⁷⁰ Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, p. 295; Petrow, 'Wilderness', p. 36; Lupton, *Lifeblood*, p. 322.

²⁷¹ *Age*, 3 March 1983, p. 17; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 March 1983, p. 5.

²⁷² Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, p. 295.

²⁷³ Flanagan and Pybus, 'Green Images', p. 161.

²⁷⁴ Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, pp. 282-283; Hutton and Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, pp. 162-163; Mulligan and Hill, *Ecological Pioneers*, p. 69.



Collection of Liz Dombrovskis, Tasmania

Peter Dombrovskis (1945-1996), *Morning Mist, Rock Island Bend, Franklin River, Tasmania*, 1979, colour photograph, 51.4 x 64 cm.

Photographs continue to play an important role in the creation of National Parks. In the October 2006 issue of *National Geographic*, the editor-in-chief, Chris Johns recorded how his magazine's coverage of central African scenery had led to thirteen national parks being declared in Gabon. The magazine's coverage of the Northwest Hawaiian Islands in their October 2005 issue had also prompted President Bush to declare 362 600 square kilometres a national monument. The area of this reserve is 'greater than all of America's national parks combined'.²⁷⁵

Wilderness photography has come a long way. From humble beginnings, it has emerged as an art form in its own right; one that can help sway public opinion and play a role in the conservation of wild places. According to Roslynn Haynes, '[b]ecause of its mass accessibility, ... photography ... has become the chief instrument of conservationists in raising awareness of the treasures of wilderness

²⁷⁵ Chris Johns, 'If you don't like the weather ...', *National Geographic*, v. 210, no. 4, October 2006, p. 12.

and especially in giving people a sense of personal involvement with these places'.²⁷⁶ What then defines a significant scenic photograph, and what differentiates a simple snapshot from a persuasive image?

Evaluating wilderness photographs

Our most authentic experience of a picture remains that solitary inward joy
of looking – when a viewer's mind is touched.²⁷⁷

Although discussing his artworks, in the above quote Roger Kemp sums up the elusive quality that creates an extraordinary picture. The same statement could equally well apply to wilderness photography. A persuasive wilderness image has certain qualities that produce an emotional response in the viewer. Although these qualities are difficult to define, photographer and author Robert Adams claims that to be a persuasive image, one that the viewer will pause to consider, a scenic photograph needs three aspects or attributes.²⁷⁸

The first attribute, the geographical, is the recording of a place. Today, digital technology enables photographers to make a record of a place with a simple click of a button. Multiple shots and the editing of mistakes are part of the process. It was another matter for the early photographers who used glass plates and cumbersome cameras. They lugged their equipment over huge distances of treacherous terrain and set up against the odds of unfavourable climatic conditions and light. For them, the process demanded perfection.²⁷⁹

The second attribute, the autobiographical, gives an insight into how the photographer saw the landscape. Why did he or she choose this particular scene from this particular angle? Has anything been excluded? Were figures included? Did the photographer alter the scene in any way to make the image more aesthetically pleasing? While Ansel Adams believed the process of taking an image involved the visualisation of the completed photograph before he released

²⁷⁶ Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, p. 315.

²⁷⁷ Roger Kemp as quoted by Sarah Scott in 'Enigmatic Kemp', *Australian Book Review*, no. 300, April 2008, p. 54.

²⁷⁸ Adams, *Beauty in Photography*, pp. 14-18.

²⁷⁹ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, pp. 30-31.

the shutter,²⁸⁰ others believed they could improve an image by rearranging the vegetation. For example, some (such as the English photographer Samuel Bourne and photography enthusiast, Eccleston du Faur in New South Wales) supported clearing the foreground of vegetation to create the perfect vista.²⁸¹ Others (such as the English art and photography writer, Alfred Wall and Tasmanian photographer John Watt Beattie) promoted the repositioning of vegetation to frame an image.²⁸² Not all photographers agreed with such philosophies. Tim Bonyhady records how the photographer Ernest Docker ‘recognised the ugliness of this axework’ and photographer Joseph Bischoff ‘delighted in spots that remained intact’.²⁸³ Such considerations take the viewer beyond the observation of a scene and provide clues as to the character and intent of the photographer.

The third attribute, the metaphorical, provides a sense of significance of place. Early photographers were content to produce a picture. While their aim was to record the scene, many of their works conformed to the artistic conventions of the day and hinted at a deeper dimension. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the pictorialists explored this further through the manipulation of their pictures and the use of emotive titles to elicit a more profound response.²⁸⁴

In the 1930s, the group f/64 photographers turned their attention to ‘pure photography’.²⁸⁵ For them, the emotional response came through an appreciation of form, stark realism and confrontation. According to his biographer Mary Street Alinder, Ansel Adams (1902-1984) believed ‘ultimately an artist must go beyond the obvious reality to communicate the full emotional power of a scene’.²⁸⁶

The idea of an image eliciting an emotional response is not new. The Romantics proposed this philosophy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and even in modern times, wilderness photography is often analysed in terms of how it

²⁸⁰ Alinder, *Ansel Adams*, p. 83.

²⁸¹ Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, pp. 194-200.

²⁸² Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, pp. 200-203.

²⁸³ Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, pp. 197-198.

²⁸⁴ Gael Newton, *Silver and Grey*, Introduction, pp. 3-4.

²⁸⁵ Hirsch, ‘Group f/64 (1932-1935)’ in Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, pp. 256-257; Troy, ‘Group f.64’, in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, pp. 264-265.

²⁸⁶ Newhall, *The History of Photography*, p. 192.

²⁸⁶ Alinder, *Ansel Adams*, p. 83.

conforms to the Romantic ideal. Images featuring mountain ranges, waterfalls, canyons and seascapes typify sublime subjects for the wilderness photograph and engender emotions such as awe and even horror.²⁸⁷ Images featuring cascades, tranquil lakes, reflections, and perhaps evidence of human activity have more in common with the picturesque. Picturesque images combine elements of both the sublime and the beautiful and in doing so ‘allowed the appreciation of nature as a work of art’.²⁸⁸ According to photo-historian Jens Jäger, ‘[t]o recognize something as picturesque afforded a specific emotional response to the world ... It had to be learned, and it required historical and artistic knowledge’.²⁸⁹

As photographers ventured into more remote regions seeking subjects for their cameras, their photographs started to challenge the accepted ideals of a balanced and aesthetically pleasing wilderness image. In particular, during the twentieth century, the convention of including a small figure or some symbol of human occupation lost favour with conservationists, who preferred to depict ‘nature devoid of human presence’.²⁹⁰ Some writers see an inherent paradox in this trend. For example, in 2002 art expert Peter Timms argued that humans are ‘an integral part of the landscape’.²⁹¹ As the photographer and academic David Stephenson has stated, ‘[n]ot all wilderness photographs have to be transparent windows on an unpeopled nature’.²⁹² Although Ansel Adams ‘never intentionally included a human or an animal in his creative landscapes,’²⁹³ he also contended ‘[t]here are always two people [in a photograph]; the photographer and the viewer’.²⁹⁴ In 2006 the sociologist, Adrian Franklin extended the argument. He pointed out that the taking of a wilderness image involved not just a photographer, but possibly a party of several walkers. Furthermore, out of sight of the camera lens, their footprints no doubt marred the otherwise pristine landscape.²⁹⁵

²⁸⁷ Stephenson, *Beautiful Lies*, p. 2.

²⁸⁸ Stephenson, *New Landscapes*, p. 3; Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, p. 112.

²⁸⁹ Jens Jäger, ‘Picturing Nations: Landscape Photography and National Identity in Britain and Germany in the Mid-Nineteenth Century’, in Joan M Schwartz and James R Ryan (eds), *Picturing Place: photography and the geographical imagination* (London, 2003) p. 123.

²⁹⁰ Stephenson, *New Landscapes*, p. 6.

²⁹¹ Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, p. 322.

²⁹² Stephenson, *Beautiful Lies*, p. 6.

²⁹³ Alinder, *Ansel Adams*, p. 239.

²⁹⁴ As quoted in John Paul Schaefer, *An Ansel Adams Guide: Basic Techniques of Photography* (Boston, 1992) p. 3.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, some wilderness photographers moved beyond sublime and picturesque subjects for their images, and focussed their cameras on the details of living or inanimate subjects. The concept was not new. From the earliest years of mechanical image making, photographers had experimented with close-up images.²⁹⁶ In the 1930s, photographers such as Ansel Adams revived interest in this aspect of photography.²⁹⁷ Gradually, subjects such as fungi, tree trunks, leaves, kelp, and sand patterns, took their place amongst more traditional wilderness subjects.²⁹⁸ For the viewer, these images, although modest in subject, inspired the same spirit of awe and wonder as more traditional images, and in doing so fulfilled the criteria for a satisfying photograph. Clearly, the strength of the wilderness photograph goes beyond the sum of its subject and its treatment. Although it defies quantification, a persuasive wilderness image is one that depicts the natural environment and leaves the viewer inspired.

Another, perhaps more prosaic aspect of evaluating a wilderness image is a consideration of its commercial value. While it could be argued that such considerations debase the photographers' intent, it is important to collectors (public and private), and photographers who rely on payment to earn a living. Aside from the emotive and intrinsic value of images such as Peter Dombrovskis *Morning Mist*, *Rock Island Bend*, which translates directly into a current commercial value, there is also a hierarchy of value, related to when and how a photographic print first appeared. This is particularly relevant when considering the value of older photographs. For example, the term 'vintage print', refers to a print made by the photographer or under his or her direction within a period of approximately five years from the taking of the original negative.²⁹⁹ These prints are usually the most valuable, and more valuable than 'later' or 'modern prints', which the photographer produced subsequently.³⁰⁰ The terms 'posthumous' or

²⁹⁵ Adrian Franklin, 'The Humanity of Wilderness Photography?' *Australian Humanities Review*, issue 38, April 2006, at <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-April-2006/EcoFranklin.html>, 29/02/2008.

²⁹⁶ Newhall, *The History of Photography*, pp. 19-20.

²⁹⁷ Alinder, *Ansel Adams*, p. 79.

²⁹⁸ Chapman, *Cradle Mountain Lake St Clair*, pp. 30, 32-33, 50-51, 58, 63-67, 78-79.

²⁹⁹ The term 'vintage photograph' is sometimes (incorrectly) used to describe an old photograph. Alinder, *Ansel Adams*, p. 314.

³⁰⁰ Ansel Adams actually believed some of his most recent prints were more valuable, because they embodied a greater wealth of printing experience. Alinder, *Ansel Adams*, p. 315.

‘estate print’ refers to a print made after the photographer’s death. As the quality of such prints can be variable, they are usually less valuable. Finally, prints made from a negative taken from a print, generally hold little or no commercial value.³⁰¹

Conclusions

There was a time when the word wilderness implied a region of danger, a place of banishment where no one went willingly. Through a few centuries, the meaning changed, and today wilderness represents a place of solitude and spiritual renewal. Such areas are often remote and difficult to access, but photography allows an appreciation of their wonders. The way photographers choose to depict landscapes has also changed. The earliest photographers were chiefly concerned with the mechanical process, but they readily adopted the artistic conventions that dictated how to represent landscapes. When some artists challenged these conventions and moved towards a more symbolic representation, photographers found ways to manipulate their images and abide by these new principles. Finally, photographers realised that the unique properties of the camera – its clarity and ability to represent a scene authentically, were its greatest strengths.

While the concept of the wilderness image is usually associated with the late twentieth century, its origins date from the earliest days of photography. Rather than just appearing, wilderness photography evolved over many decades. This thesis will now recount how the three generations of Spurling photographers contributed towards the emergence of wilderness photography in Tasmania.

³⁰¹ Lenman, ‘vintage print’, in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, p. 654.